

**Public Participation Best Practices in Environmental Decision-Making in
Newfoundland and Labrador - Analyzing the Forestry Management Planning
Process**

by

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Abstract

Public participation may improve the quality of environmental management decisions, however, the quality of such decisions depend on the quality of the participatory process. This research examines elements seen as essential for successful public participation in Newfoundland and Labrador. It also seeks to determine whether the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS) consultation process met the best practices criteria emerging from the literature. The research used an exploratory case study strategy to consider the specified process, with data collection methods including formal semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings of this research revealed that although not all of the eight best practices outlined by Reed were present in the case analyzed, they are applicable guidelines for future forest management participation processes in Newfoundland and Labrador. Two additional best practices were also identified as important for successful public engagement in the province.

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List of Abbreviations

AAC	Annual Allowable Cut
CFSI	Centre for Forest Science and Innovation
CFMA	Commercial Forest Management Area
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
DSSA	Dynamic Species Specific Areas
EA	Environmental Assessment
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organization
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
EPR	Environmental Preview Report
FMD	Forest Management District
FSB	Forest Services Branch
FAA	Forestry and Agrifoods Agency
ILFMA	Intact Landscape Forest Management Areas
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
NLLPA	Newfoundland and Labrador Lumber Producers Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPE	Office of Public Engagement
PSFMS	Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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1 CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Rationale

The complexity and uncertainty associated with environmental problems demand increasingly innovative approaches to the management of natural resources. Modern environmental policy making is afflicted by “wicked problems”, which often have no solutions, and must therefore be addressed using “temporary and imperfect resolutions” (Fischer, 1993, 172-173). With a lack of specific, identifiable strategies to determine the resolution of these problems (Fischer, 1993), authors suggest that environmental problems are not well suited to the managerial approach that dominated public administration in the US from the late 19th to mid-20th century (Beierle & Cayford, 2002).

Another key feature of many local, regional and global environmental challenges is the fact that their potential impacts are not limited to a specific area and group of people; instead, these challenges are usually value-laden and have multi-level impacts. For example, a management plan typically requires the involvement of multiple actors and/or agencies, such as several levels of government, interest groups and the public (Beierle, 1999; Reed, 2008).

The decision-making process addressing environmental issues must therefore be transparent and must consider the values and opinions of relevant stakeholders. It is to this end that stakeholder participation is more commonly becoming entrenched in the

environmental decision-making process (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Reed, 2008; Stringer et al., 2009). Abelson et al. (2003) argues that decision making regarding complex issues requires involvement of an informed citizenry, and should feature the pondering of evidence on the issue, along with discussions of potential options. One definition of public participation states that it is “the practice of involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations/institutions responsible for policy development” (Rowe & Frewer, 2005, p. 253).

According to the literature, public participation in environmental decision-making from a normative perspective is a democratic right, and is protected as such in several international policies, most notably in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe’s (UNECE) 1998 Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, also called the Aarhus Convention (Reed, 2008, Stringer et al., 2009). Nelson and Wright (1995) highlight the participation process as a viable means through which social change can emerge, and it is also thought to allow for greater inclusion of citizens who are not usually represented or involved in decision making, such as marginalized groups (Martin and Sherington, 1997). Likewise, the empowerment of citizens is also posited as a potential benefit of stakeholder participation (Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy 1993; Macnaghten and Jacobs 1997; Wallerstein 1999). Additionally, the literature suggests that if participation is seen as transparent and thorough (in that it considers the varying views), then it should lead to increased public trust in the decisions made (Richards et al. 2004).

Researchers also put forward several benefits of stakeholder participation from a pragmatic perspective. Beierle (2002) suggests that the participative process can deliver higher quality decisions, since conclusions are as a result of more complete information. Stakeholder involvement also leads to a feeling of ownership over the process as well as its outcomes, and this can result in follow through on implementation of decisions and enduring support of those decisions (Richards et al., 2004). The process is also deemed to establish common ground and trust between participants, which could have the spillover effect of transforming combative relationships (Stringer et al., 2006).

Although studies suggest that public participation may improve the quality of environmental decisions, they also clearly point out that the quality of such a decision is strongly dependent on the quality of the process that leads to it (Reed, 2008). Indeed, proponents for improved public participation often refer to the virtues of the process (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). For instance, Abelson et al (2003) states that deliberative processes are meaningful, not only because of their end product, but also due to the value of the process itself. Arnstein (1969) considered true participation to involve a high level of empowerment of the public and a direct input into the decision process.

In spite of the many benefits that participative processes promise, there are also significant costs associated with the consultation process. These costs include time, both that of citizens and that of decision-makers, as well as financial resources and social and political implications (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004). Bearing in mind the various costs associated with

the public participation process, it is essential that the participation process is implemented in a way that maximizes benefits while avoiding negative costs as much as possible.

To ensure that participative processes are effective and appropriate, Reed (2008) suggests that research is needed to further identify and prioritize the factors that improve the process of stakeholder participation, thereby leading to stronger and more durable decisions in different contexts. Identifying key features of best practice in context specific participation is useful as some scholars have pointed out that existing public participation literature lacks guidance on best practices (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Innes and Booher, 2004; Reed, 2008; Rouillard, Reeves, Heal and Ball, 2014). Designers of consultation processes are plagued by disagreements regarding the best ways of carrying out participatory decision-making processes (National Research Council, 1996). Identification of best practices in public participation could also help to combat disillusionment of citizens, decision-makers and practitioners (Reed, 2008).

Recognizing the value of public participation, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has already been involved in targeted efforts at improving public involvement. The Office of Public Engagement has been operational since 2012, with the aim of ensuring that “every Provincial Government department can launch effective, targeted and interactive public consultations” (“About the OPE”, 2015, par. 3). With the 2014 launch of the Open Government Initiative, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is increasingly embracing collaboration and dialogue to help in identifying solutions and informing policies and programs for its citizens. Focusing on best practices for public

participation initiatives could further inform and enhance the ongoing public participation efforts in the province.

Research on public participation in forest management in Newfoundland and Labrador is one meaningful area of focus that is in line with the goals of the Provincial Forest Research Strategy and with the broader aspirations of government. According to the 2010 research strategy, research specifically aimed at the decision-making process could help inform changes to policy and management strategies, thereby improving the forest management process in the province. The strategy mentions public engagement as a possible area related to the decision-making process that could be examined to help inform meaningful forest management.

Through a review of existing literature, Reed (2008) puts forward eight (8) best practices for stakeholder participation. This research will outline these best practice criteria and explore whether they are considered important in the Newfoundland and Labrador context and if they were present in the public participation for the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS).

1.2 Research Questions

The overarching aim of this research is to determine what elements are seen as essential for successful public participation in the Newfoundland and Labrador context and to discover whether the public participation process that led to the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable

Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS) met the best practices criteria emerging from the literature. Hence, three (3) relevant research questions have been identified:

1. To what extent have Reed's (2008) best practices in public participation been applied in the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS) public participation process?
2. Are Reed's (2008) best practices considered relevant to the Newfoundland and Labrador context?
3. What other characteristics (outside of those outlined by Reed) are relevant to environmentally related public participation processes in the Newfoundland and Labrador context?

1.3 Research Objectives

The specific objectives that must be met in order to get valid answers to these questions are:

- To determine what were the objectives of the 2014-2024 PSFMS public participation process and whether they were met.
- To identify the extent to which the criteria outlined by Reed (2008) were present in the PSFMS public participation process.
- To compare the principles outlined in the NL Office of Public Engagement's guide with those outlined in Reed's (2008) best practice framework.
- To assess whether participants, decision-makers and practitioners believe that Reed's criteria are relevant and applicable to the NL context.

- To identify the criteria that participants in a previous participatory process in NL believe are relevant best practices for effective public involvement in the NL context.

The best practice criteria outlined by Reed (2008) was chosen as the benchmark because, based on analysis of the literature, it was seen as a comprehensive compilation of best practices of stakeholder participation in environmental management. The framework is considered credible because it was developed by a Social Science research expert in the field and it is based on a grounded theory analysis of existing literature, which includes quantitative evaluations, qualitative studies and case studies (Reed, 2008). The framework has been utilized previously to evaluate public participation in wildlife management (Tlhaolang, 2014) and has also been cited by numerous studies related to public participation in environmental governance (Ulybina, 2015; Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2015; Rouillard et al., 2014; Stringer et al., 2009).

1.4 Thesis Organization

This document comprises a total of seven chapters. Chapter two provides a review of literature related to public participation, providing an overview and brief history of the concept, including its application in environmental management. A summary of the political theory that highlights the need for public participation, deliberative democracy, is also given. Various types and levels of participation are outlined, along with different participatory methods. The literature review further discusses arguments for and against

public participation and outlines how participatory processes are evaluated. An overview of Reed's (2008) best practices is also provided.

Chapter three offers a historical overview of forest management in Canada generally, and more specifically in Newfoundland and Labrador. The various management regimes throughout the years are discussed, as are the legislation relevant to forest management in the province. Additionally, the chapter summarizes the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS).

Chapter four details the methods utilized in this research, and the rationale behind their selection. The data collection and analysis process is described, including how interviewees were selected, how interviews were carried out, and how data was entered and subsequently analyzed. An overview of the case being studied is also given.

The results of the data analysis are detailed in chapter five of this document. The chapter begins with highlights of the results related to the eight best practices put forward by Reed (2008), with two specific areas of focus – whether the best practices are seen as important to the province and whether they were evident in the 2012 PSFMS public participation process. The next section of the chapter highlights the themes that were not put forward by Reed, but were considered important by the interviewees and the documents analyzed in this study.

Chapter six offers a detailed discussion of the findings and considers how, based on these findings, future public participations processes can be improved. Chapter seven summarizes the recommendations arising from the discussion chapter and outlines possible future research and policy focus areas.

1.5 Key Concepts

As will be established in chapter two, the literature reveals that there are several definitions of public participation and often the terms ‘public participation’, ‘public engagement’, ‘citizen engagement’, ‘community engagement’, and ‘civic involvement’ are used interchangeably (Montevecchi, 2010). The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that “Public participation affords stakeholders (those that have an interest or stake in an issue, such as individuals, interest groups, communities) the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives” (“What is Public Participation,” para. 2). This explanation of the concept of stakeholders is in line with the definition put forward by the International Finance Corporation:

“Stakeholders are persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may have interests in a project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, either positively or negatively. Stakeholders may include locally affected communities or individuals and their formal and informal representatives, national or local government authorities, politicians, religious leaders, civil society organizations and groups with special interests, the academic community, or other businesses” (IFC, 2007, p. 10).

The EPA further points out that “the public consists of a range of stakeholders holding an array of views and concerns on an issue” (“What is Public Participation,” para. 3). This interpretation of public participation will guide the discussions throughout this document. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, public participation/engagement and stakeholder participation/engagement will be used interchangeably.

2 Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Public Participation

Public participation is often viewed as a complex concept, mainly due to its broad definition and scope (Rowe & Frewer, 2004). Some authors view public participation as being open to debate since “the public may be involved in a number of different ways and at a number of different levels” (Rowe & Frewer, 2004, p. 514). For instance, the definition offered by Beierle & Cayford (2002) states that public participation is “any of several “mechanisms” intentionally instituted to involve the lay public or their representatives in administrative decision-making” (p. 6). The researchers that put forward this definition use ‘public participation’ as an overarching term, making no distinction between public participation and stakeholder engagement as some authors do. Instead, the definition encompasses a range of characterizations of who the public is, how the public is represented and how and why they are involved (Beierle & Cayford, 2002).

Graham & Phillips' (1998) definition is also very broad, as it refers to public participation as the "deliberate and active engagement of citizens by the council and/or administration - outside the electoral process - in making public policy decisions or in setting strategic directions" (p. 4).

Another definition posited by Rowe & Frewer (2004) is: "the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda setting, decision-making and policy forming of organizations or institutions responsible for policy development" (p. 512). Regardless of the wide coverage of the definitions and lack of specifics, the definitions all refer to involving citizens in the process of making decisions that will ultimately affect them.

Public participation is seen as a challenge to the 'managerial' model of public administration that dominated in the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). During that period, the traditional method of managing government policy involved government administrators being responsible for determining how to proceed on various decisions that had possible impacts on the society (Beierle & Cayford, 2002).

A subsequent paradigm shift led to pluralism becoming the dominant standard for administrative decision-making during the 1960s and 1970s (Reich, 1985). Within the pluralist paradigm, government administrators were seen as mediators among different interests within the society, and decisions regarding the public good were expected to be debated and arrived at through negotiations involving varying interest groups (Beierle &

Cayford, 2002). This shift was reflected, for instance, in the significant number of public participation legislation that were enacted in the USA at that time, including the Freedom of Information Act (1966), the Federal Advisory Committee Act (1972), the Privacy Act (1974), and the Government in the Sunshine Act (1976).

The pluralist paradigm gave way to the “popular” democratic theory, which sees the act of participation as being vital to decision-making and to strengthening civic responsibility among the citizenry (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). This perspective sees communities, and therefore citizens, as pivotal in policymaking related to environmental protection. Researchers assert that the rise in public participation is attributable to a decline in public confidence in policy decision making processes and reduced trust in political actors and experts (Rowe & Frewer, 2004).

2.2 Deliberative Democracy

The need for public participation in decision-making is recognized and highlighted by deliberative democratic theory. Deliberative democracy is a school of thought in political theory that claims that political decisions should be the product of fair and reasonable discussion and debate among citizens (Eagan, 2007). The term ‘deliberative democracy’ was coined by Joseph Bessette (1980) and further promoted by Bernard Manin (1987) and Joshua Cohen (1989). Liberal theorist, John Rawls, and critical theorist, Jurgen Habermas, were two of the earliest influencers of the theory, who assisted with the ‘deliberative turn’

by publishing works in which they referred to themselves as deliberative democrats (Dryzek, 2000).

“Deliberation refers either to a particular sort of discussion - one that involves the careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some proposition—or to an interior process by which an individual weighs reasons for and against courses of action.” (Fearon, 1998, p. 63) According to Dryzek (2000), deliberation is now seen as the core of democracy, and has usurped this role from acts such as voting or even self-government. “The deliberative turn represents a renewed concern with the authenticity of democracy: the degree to which democratic control is substantive rather than symbolic, and engaged by competent citizens.” (Dryzek, 2000, p. 1)

Like public participation, there has also been several definitions of deliberative democracy, however Elster (1998) points out that they all agree that the concept “includes collective decision making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives” and “includes decision making by means of arguments offered by and to participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality” (p 8).

The overarching definition posited by Fearon (1998) suggests that, in theory, deliberation can be both an individual process as well as a group process. Abelson et al. (2003) clarifies this, making it clear that most deliberation theorists and practitioners consider group deliberation as the central feature of this participatory concept. However, there is a specific criterion that distinguishes deliberation from generic group activity. Indeed, authors

indicate that it is the act of considering diverse views and collectively reaching an informed decision that makes a group activity pointedly deliberative (Abelson et al., 2003).

“Collective “‘problem-solving” discussion is viewed as the critical element of deliberation, to allow individuals with different backgrounds, interests and values to listen, understand, potentially persuade and ultimately come to more reasoned, informed and public-spirited decisions” (Abelson et al, 2003, p. 241).

Deliberative democratic theory shifts the focus of democracy to a view anchored in conceptions of accountability and discussion, making it ‘talk-centric’ instead of ‘voting-centric’ (Chambers, 2003). Deliberative democracy brings the values of citizens into the realm of democratic decision-making, with the ultimate aim of increased citizen participation, better decisions, and a society that is genuinely democratic (Eagan, 2007). Dryzek (2000) states that authentic democracy exists to the degree that the preferences of relevant interests help in influencing outcomes that are decided upon collectively. Deliberative democracy therefore claims to be a more just or democratic way of dealing with pluralism (Chambers, 2003).

Deliberative theorists posit that publicity is a necessary feature of legitimate democratic processes (Chambers, 2003). However, theorists differ in their view of how consensus influences the deliberative process, with some claiming that the deliberative process of exchanging arguments for contrasting viewpoints can and should produce a consensus, while others suggest that disagreement will remain after the deliberative process is

completed but that deliberation can produce legitimate outcomes without consensus (Eagan, 2007).

Although it is widely accepted that deliberative processes are beneficial to decision making that informs public policy, there is no consensus on whether deliberation activities should be undertaken within or outside government. Traditionally, it is seen as a feature of representative democracy, therefore taking place within government; however, it can also occur outside government in the form of direct citizen involvement through face to face meetings, as well as a mediated process through the mass media (Abelson et al., 2003).

2.3 Participatory Methods

There are various methods of public participation, which are wide ranging and have grown in recent years (Rowe & Frewer, 2004). See Table 1, which outlines some formalized public participation methods. Some participation methods feature deliberation more extensively than other, for example citizen's juries are seen as having deliberation as a core feature (Abelson et al, 2003). On the other hand, some methods, such as public hearings, appear to be used simply to involve the public as an end in itself, as the appearance of involvement is sufficient; however, there is often little genuine interest in implementing recommendations from such exercises (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Public hearings have been largely criticized for not providing meaningful participation; however, it remains the most common form of face-to-face public involvement (Beierle, 1999).

Table 1: A Number of the Most Formalized Public Participation Methods

Participation Method	Nature of Participants	Time Scale/Duration	Characteristics/Mechanism
Referenda	Potentially all members of national or local population; realistically, a significant proportion of these	Vote cast at single point in time	Vote is usually choice of one or two options. All participants have equal influence. Final outcome is binding.
Public hearings/ inquiries	Interested citizens, limited in number by size of venue. True participants are experts and politicians making presentations	May last many weeks/months, even years. Usually held during weekdays/working hours.	Entails presentations by agencies regarding plans in open forum. Public may voice opinions but have no direct impact on recommendation.
Public opinion surveys	Large sample (e.g., 100s or 1,000s), usually representative of the population segments of interest.	Single event, usually lasting no more than several minutes	Often enacted through written questionnaire or telephone survey. May involve variety of questions. Used for information gathering.
Negotiated rule making	Small number of representatives of stakeholder groups (may include public representatives).	Uncertain: strict deadline usually set: days/weeks/months.	Working committee of stakeholder representatives (and from sponsor). Consensus required on specific question (usually, a regulation).
Consensus conference	Generally, ten to sixteen members of public (with no knowledge on	Preparatory demonstrations and lectures (etc.) to inform panelists about topic, then	Lay panel with independent facilitator questions expert witnesses chosen by stakeholder panel. Meetings open to


	topic) selected by steering committee as “representative” of the general public.	three-day conference.	wider public. Conclusions on key questions made via report or press conference.
Citizens’ jury/panel	Generally, twelve to twenty members of public selected by stakeholder panel to be roughly representative of the local population.	Not precise but generally involve meetings over a few days (e.g., four to ten).	Lay panel with independent facilitator questions expert witnesses chosen by stakeholder panel. Meetings not generally open. Conclusions on key questions made via report or press conference.
Citizen/public advisory committee	Small group selected by sponsor to represent views of various groups or communities (may not comprise members of true public).	Takes place over an extended period of time.	Group convened by sponsor to examine some significant issue. Interaction with industry representatives.
Focus groups	Small group of five to twelve selected to be representative of public; several groups may be used for one project (comprising members of subgroups).	Single meeting, usually up to two hours.	Free discussion on general topic with video/tape recording and little input/direction from facilitator. Used to assess opinions/attitudes.

Source: Adapted from Rowe, G., and Frewer, L.J. (2000). Public participation methods: a framework for evaluation. (p. 8-9)

Yee (2010) points out that several hierarchies of types and levels of participation have been put forward. These various models usually include low levels of involvement, where participants are educated or informed, mid-range levels of engagement, where participants are involved in decision making about specific predetermined questions, and high levels of participation, where stakeholders assume management or significant leadership of their own initiatives (Arnstein, 1969; Buchy and Hoverman, 2000; IAP2, 2014).

One model describing various levels of involvement of the public is the Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) summarized in Table 2. This model outlines five levels of participation in order of increasing impact of the public on the final decision (IAP2, 2014).

Table 2: IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

	and/or solutions.		considered.		
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). (2014). 'IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum'. Retrieved from http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/Foundations_Course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum.pdf?hhSearchTerms=%22spectrum%22

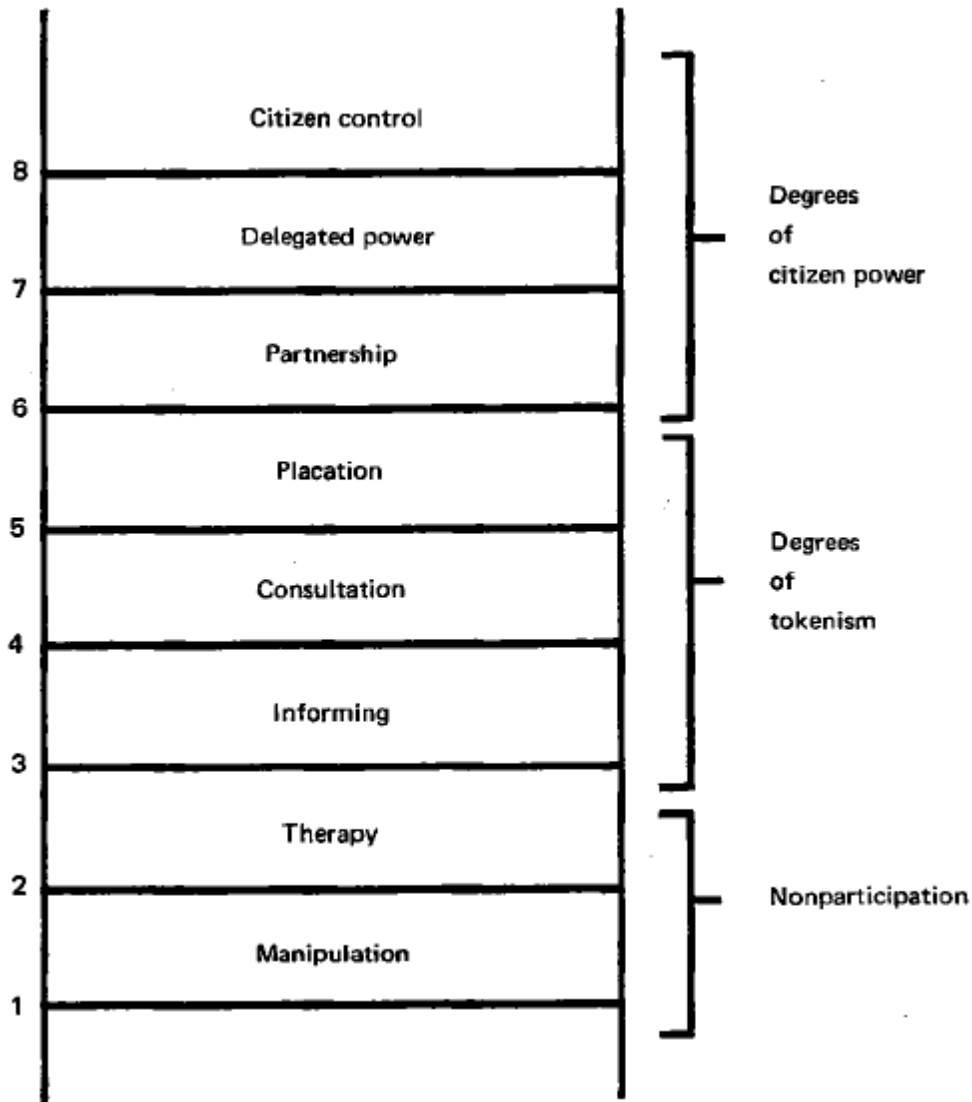
In positing her hierarchy, Arnstein (1969) delves into the issue of power, which gives credence to the idea asserted by Slocum et al. (1995) that the role of power is central to participatory processes. Indeed, the issue of who holds the power in a participatory process could lead to conflicts (Kelly, 2012). Buchy and Hoverman (2000) suggest that citizens often get involved in participation with the expectation of gaining greater control, while, conversely, the managers of the process, which are usually government agencies are often

unwilling to surrender control. Arnstein created a typology of 8 types of participation to highlight varying degrees of power in citizen participation activities (Arnstein, 1969).

The bottom two rungs of the ladder (manipulation and therapy) indicate “non-participation” and are viewed as being used by decision-makers as a substitute for genuine participation. Arnstein suggests that instead of engaging people, such levels of involvement merely facilitate the power holders’ attempts to “educate” or “cure” participants (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

The mid-level rungs, between 3 and 5 (informing, consultation, and placation), are perceived as “tokenism”, where citizens can voice their views and provide advice, but lack the power to guarantee that these views will truly influence the final decision. Rungs 6, 7 and 8 (partnership, delegated power, and citizen control) are considered “citizen power”, as citizens are empowered to negotiate with power holders or even have full managerial power.

Figure 1: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



Source: Arnstein, S.R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. (p. 217)

Arnstein views the tokenism rungs of the ladder as a sincere move toward full participation; however, she argues that if such levels of engagement do not include other modes of participation, then the rung “is still a sham since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account” (p. 219).

Arnstein considered true participation to involve a high level of empowerment of the public and a direct input into the decision process. However, the literature suggests that others view participation as a less constrained concept, even viewing ‘communication’ in which the public has no input but simply receives information, as an aspect of participation (Rowe & Frewer, 2004). This wider definition seems to be the one adopted by many researchers, who often use the term in this broad sense, incorporating methods such as surveys. Some critics of the deliberative paradigm assert that it is naive to view information as a mere tool for informing dialogue, thereby ignoring the reality of information being a source of power, which can further influence the participatory process (Abelson et al., 2003).

2.4 Comparisons between authentic and unauthentic participation

King et al. (1998) posit that authentic participation is participation that is considered effective by all involved parties and requires a rethinking of the roles of administrators and citizens. Additionally in an authentic participative process, both citizens and administrators are interested and invested in the process (King et al., 1998).

The authors suggest a three-pronged approach for moving toward authentic participation:

1. Empower and educate community members
2. Re-educate administrators
3. Enable administrative structures and processes.

Table 3: Comparison of Authentic and Unauthentic Participation

	Unauthentic Participation	Authentic Participation
Interaction Style	Conflictual	Collaborative
Participation is sought	After the agenda is set and decisions are made	Early; before anything is set
Role of administrator	Expert technician/manager	Collaborative technician/governor
Administrative skills needed	Technical; managerial	Technical, interpersonal skills, discourse skills, facilitation skills
Role of citizen	Unequal participant	Equal partner
Citizenship skills needed	None	Civics, participation skills, discourse skills
Approach toward “other”	Mistrust	Trust
Administrative process	Static, invisible, closed	Dynamic, visible, open
Citizen options	Reactive	Proactive or reactive
Citizen output	Buy-in	Design
Administrator output	Decision	Process
Time to decision	Appears shorter and easier but often involves going back and “redoing” based upon citizen reaction.	Appears longer and more onerous but usually doesn’t require redoing because citizens have been involved throughout; may take less time to reach decisions than traditional processes.
Decision is made	By administrator/political and/or administrative processes perhaps in consultation with citizens.	Emerge as a result of discourse; equal opportunity for all to enter the discourse and to influence the outcomes.

Source: King, C.S., Felty, K.M., O’Neill Susel, B. (1998). The question of participation: toward authentic public participation in public administration. (p. 321)

2.5 Arguments against participation

In spite of the abundance of benefits of public participation, as outlined in chapter 1, there are several arguments against public participation in complex policy decisions. A key

critique has been posited by Brooks and Johnson (1991), who suggest that human inadequacies place boundaries on citizens' ability to engage in complex decision-making. This is in line with the 'information deficit model' (or deficit model) within science communication studies. The deficit model posits that public uncertainty and distrust of modern science and technology can be attributed to a lack of knowledge about said science or technology (Sturgis & Allum, 2004). The public might not understand issues such as 'uncertainty' and may be unable to recognize science as an incremental process, and this limits the extent to which citizens should participate in complex policymaking (Brooks and Johnson, 1991). It is understandable therefore, that Rowe & Frewer (2000) point out that it is likely that more knowledge based decisions will require lower levels of public involvement than more value based decisions (p. 6). Several researchers point to deficiencies in the knowledge and reasoning ability of laypersons as arguments against participation (Earle and Cvetkovich, 1995, and Slovic, Fischhoff and Lichtenstein, 1982).

Attitudes and motivations of the public may impact their values and dictate how they participate (McCallum and Santos 1997; Ravetz, 1986) and this limits their ability to contribute to complex decision-making (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Moffet (1996) points out that the general public has limited ability to contribute to complex decision-making and also claims that there is often limited public interest in participating in such activities. Whether based on ignorance, personal motivations or attitudes, the public can perceive certain risks as crises; Moffet (1996) warns that in fostering legitimacy and public support for decisions, administrators should be careful that priorities are not driven by "the crisis of the day" (p. 379).

2.6 Public participation in environmental decision-making

Because of complexity, environmental decision making often calls upon “knowledge, commitment and action of multiple levels of government”, interest groups and citizens and for a protracted period of time (Beierle, 1999, p. 77). Over the past few decades, public participation has played an increasingly important role in environmental management (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). Decision making in environmental policy poses problems because issues are often technically complex, value-laden and multiple interests are present in an environment of conflict and mistrust.

2.7 Evaluation of Public Participation

According to Mannarini and Talo (2013), there have been several attempts at identifying criteria for evaluating citizen participation processes throughout the literature. Rosener (1981) however pointed out that there are major problems with evaluating citizen participation processes, because the concept of participation is complicated and contains many values and there is no consensus regarding evaluation criteria. Thomas Webler’s (1995) criteria of fairness and competence, however, attempts to lessen the confusion about evaluation by combining ethical-normative and functional-analytic arguments, resulting in the position that public participation should manifest the general goals of fairness and competence.

Beierle (1999) identifies the two common forms of evaluation of public participation: process-oriented and interest-oriented. Process oriented evaluation sets out to answer 5 main questions: (Beierle, 1999, p. 79)

- 1) Were participants representative?
- 2) Was the membership balanced?
- 3) Did participation occur early in the process?
- 4) Were there face to face discussions between the public and agency representatives?
- 5) Was the agency committed to the participatory process and responsive to public input?

The author criticizes this form of evaluation, as it ignores the outcomes of the process.

Interest-oriented evaluation measures the extent to which parties' specific goals were achieved. This form of evaluation measures outcomes, but does so from the perspective of one or a few of the represented interests (Beierle, 1999).

Beierle (1999) posits an evaluative framework, designed to “1) identify the strengths and weaknesses of a number of different participatory mechanisms, 2) to be ‘objective’, in the sense of not taking the perspective of any one party to a decision, and 3) to measure – to the extent feasible- tangible outcomes” (p. 79).

2.8 Overview of Reed's Framework

Mark Reed, a professor in Interdisciplinary Environmental Research, conducted a Grounded Theory Analysis of existing literature on public participation, including quantitative evaluations, qualitative studies and case studies (Reed, 2008). This analysis was “performed by reading texts with specific questions in mind, coding passages using keywords as answers emerge, and using the keywords to sort quotes into themes from which theory can be derived” (Reed, 2008, p. 2422). His literature review scrutinized the claims made both in favour of and against stakeholder participation, and resulted in the identification of specific recommendations for best practice participation.

According to Reed (2008), the best practice features identified underscore the need to change what he calls the ‘tool-kit approach’¹ (p. 2421), and use instead an approach that highlights participation as a process. He points out that in order for a participatory process to be successful, these best practices should be observed.

According to Reed (2008), the eight best practices in stakeholder participation that are derived from existing literature are:

1. Stakeholder participation needs to be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust and learning

¹ The toolkit approach is where participation practitioners focus on selecting specific ‘tools’ or methods of participation based on the specific nature or context of the decision to be made.

2. Stakeholder participation should be considered as early as possible and throughout the process
3. Relevant stakeholders need to be analyzed and represented systematically
4. Clear objectives for the participatory process need to be agreed among stakeholders at the outset
5. Methods should be selected and tailored to the decision-making context, considering the objectives, type of participants and appropriate level of engagement
6. Highly skilled facilitation is essential
7. Local and scientific knowledge should be integrated
8. Participation needs to be institutionalized

These criteria served as the basis of comparison to the actual case of public participation previously mentioned. Below, an overview of each point is provided.

Best practice 1 - Stakeholder participation needs to be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust and learning

This best practice suggests that based on the variety of choices that participation professionals have in terms of designing participatory processes, it is important to have an overarching philosophy that guides the development of participation initiatives.

According to Reed (2008), the literature emphasizes the need to empower participants in two main ways: (1) ensuring that participants have the power to influence decisions, and (2) ensuring that participants have the technical capability to engage effectively with the

decision. He states that “If a decision has already been made or cannot really be influenced by stakeholders, then participation is not appropriate.” (Reed, 2008, p. 2422). Issues such as educating participants and developing knowledge and confidence are highlighted, and Reed posits that by dealing with matters of power inequalities and trust, it is possible to effectively engage all stakeholders in dialogue. Ensuring that the procedure facilitates iterative, two-way learning is also a key consideration. Issues such as these will influence the perception of a fair and balanced process, both by participants and observers of the process.

Best practice 2 - Stakeholder participation should be considered as early as possible and throughout the process

An assertion by Reed, based on his analysis, is that “When implementing a participatory process, stakeholder participation should be considered right from the outset, from concept development and planning, through implementation, to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.” (Reed, 2008, p. 2422). He suggests that many participative processes engage stakeholders at the implementation stage, with some processes now involving stakeholders in evaluation and monitoring initiatives. He points out that this makes it harder to convince stakeholders to participate and makes their role a reactive one, where they are simply reacting to a proposal that can be perceived as already finalized. According to Reed, relevant authors throughout the literature advocate involving stakeholders in decision-making as early as possible.

Best Practice 3 - Relevant stakeholders need to be analyzed and represented systematically

Reed claims that, based on the literature, there is increasingly more use of stakeholder analysis in systematically representing individuals pertinent to environmental decision-making. He indicates that much of the literature considers stakeholders to be self-evident and self-construed and thus focus on categorizing these stakeholders to better understand them. He argues however, that even such categorization demands stakeholder analysis as it is essential to identify which individuals are affected by or can affect the system. There are several tools and methods for such analyses. Additionally, Reed points out that identifying stakeholders is an ongoing process, with stakeholders being added while the analysis continues.

Best Practice 4 - Clear objectives for the participatory process need to be agreed among stakeholders at the outset

Reed (2008) asserts that goals must be decided upon in order to determine the appropriate process to be undertaken and the level of engagement necessary. He claims that this is closely linked to stakeholder analysis, and even suggests that this activity may be subsumed in such analyses. He suggests that the focus should not be on consensus building, as this could lead to a general focus instead of specific operational decisions. Necessary trade-offs might be relevant therefore, and this should take place in the context of exploring the various points of views of participants. The literature points out that when goals are

developed through deliberation between participants, it is more likely that participants will feel a sense of ownership of the process and the outcomes will be better suited to their priorities. Additionally, such a process fosters partnerships and motivates active, sustained engagement.

Best Practice 5 - Methods should be selected and tailored to the decision-making context, considering the objectives, type of participants and appropriate level of engagement

The literature reveals that the objectives of the process will determine what methods are employed in engaging stakeholders. The level of engagement is also critical in determining what methods to utilize in the participation process, with several typologies of participation indicating the most appropriate methods for the various levels of engagement. Another major determinant of the methods to be used is the decision-making context, which includes environmental and socio-cultural factors. It is suggested that methods must also be adapted to the relevant stage in the process and changes that might occur throughout the process. With this in mind, facilitators of such processes must be flexible.

Best Practice 6 - Highly skilled facilitation is essential

According to Reed, “The outcome of any participatory process is far more sensitive to the manner in which it is conducted than the tools that are used.” (p. 2425). Environmental decision-making contexts can often be conflictual, and as such, it is important to have highly skilled facilitators to effectively navigate such a landscape. Reed warns that

sometimes methods that appear simple, such as informal group discussions, require the highest levels of expertise. There are several skills that are relevant in ensuring success in such processes; the facilitator must be open, approachable, seen as impartial, handle dominating individuals, challenge participants to question their assumptions, and generate participation from reticent individuals.

Best Practice 7 - Local and scientific knowledge should be integrated

The literature advocates that scientific analysis should inform deliberative processes (Reed, 2008). Some authors advise however, that such information must be carefully balanced to combat the possibility of bias. Reed (2008) states that, “In combination with local knowledge, scientific knowledge can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of complex and dynamic natural systems and processes” (p. 2425). He points out that there is a growing body of literature promoting a combination of local and scientific knowledge as a means of empowering local communities to manage environmental issues. Some researchers acknowledge an overlap between local and scientific knowledge, with some claiming that this is due to assimilation of scientific knowledge by local practitioners. As a result, many believe that both knowledge bases are ultimately compatible.

Best Practice 8 - Participation needs to be institutionalized

Reed (2008) posits that institutionally embedding stakeholder participation may ensure the long-term success of participatory processes. The literature points out that participation

needs to be embedded in institutions, and not only in policies, as is often the case. This might mean there is a need to shift the organizational culture to ensure that the outcomes of participatory processes are respected. Such institutionalization demands that institutions that manage participatory processes become responsive to the iterative nature of participation. It is acknowledged that this might be difficult to implement, but is seen as a necessary step in the success of participatory initiatives.

3 Chapter 3 - Forest Management in Canada & Newfoundland and Labrador

According to Howlett (2001), over the years the forest sector has been essential to Canada, with its nationwide importance earning it the title of a “truly national Canadian” industry (p. 3). The Canadian forest policy process is decentralized and is primarily provincially led. Howlett (2001) states that the forest sector has received relatively little treatment in the policy literature due to its fragmented industrial subsectors (including softwood, lumber, pulp, and newsprint), jurisdictions and organizational behavior. Section 92 of The Constitution Act, 1867, specifies that each province is able to enact laws regarding its forest resources, non-renewable natural resources, and electrical energy. Forestry operations in all provinces, however, must comply with federal legislation and international agreements signed by the Canadian government (National Resources Canada, 2016).

Forest management in Canada has been through various regimes that have changed over time based on social and economic conditions (Kelly, 2012). According to Howlett (2001), four regimes have characterized Canadian forest policy over the years. The first was established by Europeans in the early settlement period and involved unregulated small scale exploitation, mainly for domestic and construction purposes. This was then transformed in the early 19th century to initial licensing schemes for removal of timber at a time when revenue enhancement was the focus of the regime. During this period, governments were the owners of forest lands. Long-term conservation of forest resources was the third regime and this took place in the last two decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. This conservation was done through regulations designed to “avoid waste and promote natural regeneration” (Howlett, 2001, p. 24).

Howlett (2001) points out that the fourth regime emerged in the years surrounding the Second World War. Efforts to promote and ensure long-term resource supplies became necessary due to depletion of the resource attributable to the increase in the newsprint and pulp and paper industries. The regime included campaigns to promote artificial regeneration and the establishment of long-term timber management agreements with producers. Dubbed ‘the contemporary Canadian forest policy regime’ by Howlett (2001), this era was described as “public forest management for private timber harvesting” (Howlett, 2001, p. 8). This approach with governments regulating the harvesting practices of companies with the aim of preventing wastage or damage of timber supplies. This period also saw a shift from a dependence on natural regeneration to artificial regeneration of forest resource.

Kelly (2012) points out that from the 1960s, federal environmental policy in Canada was regulatory in nature and involved bargaining between mainly two stakeholders, industry and government. She notes, however, that in recent years this system has become more collaborative in nature, with greater emphasis being placed on precaution and planning and voluntary, market-based initiatives, and a decision-making process that includes multiple stakeholders. She reasons that this transformation is due to a variety of stakeholders, such as environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) and outfitters, demanding greater inclusion in policy decisions regarding land use and natural resources.

The various forest policy regimes in Newfoundland and Labrador, as outlined by Howlett (2001), included an unregulated system prior to 1875, which then changed to a system of regulation for revenue beginning in 1875, conservation from 1955, and then timber management commencing in 1970.

Nazir and Moores (2001) posit that forest policy has now evolved to a new regime of ecosystem-based management, also known as sustainable forest management. This shift from timber management to ecosystem-based management comes directly from the Forestry Act of 1990, which states that “a forest management district shall be managed in accordance with the principles of sustained yield forest management” (Section 8). The Act (Forestry Act, 1990, Section 2s) defines ‘sustained yield forest management’ as: "A policy, method or plan of management to provide for an optimum continuous supply of timber in a manner consistent with other resource management objectives, sound environmental practices and the principle of sustainable development."

“The 2003 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy referred to the change in focus as a “new vision” for forestry in the province, which would focus on “finding a balance between the ecological, economic and social values that the public defines” (DNR 2003, p. 1). The strategy further pointed out that sustainable forest management would aid in finding such a balance as it focuses on ecosystem complexity and uncertainty, and recognizes a crucial role for adaptive management in the process.

The forest management planning process in Newfoundland and Labrador takes place at various levels and involves three main documents, all enshrined in the Forestry Act 1990. First, there is a 10-year sustainable forest management strategy (previously a 20-year strategy) which is an overarching guiding document that outlines the vision and goal for the management of forest resources in the province. Second, 5-year operating plans for 18 forest districts in Newfoundland and 6 forest districts in Labrador (DNR, 2014) provide specifics regarding forest activities and guidelines for the specified period. The 5 year plans are developed by planning teams within the districts, comprising government resource managers, relevant non-government organizations and a local citizens’ advisory group representative (Moores & Duinker, 1998). Finally, annual operating plans, also prepared at the district level, detail guidelines regarding harvesting and silvicultural plans for the year (Kelly, 2012; Nazir & Moores, 2001).

The district level planning process for the 5-year plans are viewed as the most detailed, as they focus on specifics such as designating harvests and mitigation measures; additionally, this process requires Environmental Assessment (EA) registration and approval (Kelly, 2012). Kelly (2012) asserts that the other two planning processes are less intricate, as the

overarching strategy requires EA registration but does not outline explicit forestry activities, while annual operating plans include specifics regarding forest management activities but do not require EA registration and approval.

In 1995, the Newfoundland Forest Service completed an environmental preview report (EPR) that focused on strategies for the implementation of the new management direction. This report outlined the structure and functioning of the 5 year planning process (Moores and Duinker, 1998) and also influenced the forest policy objectives for the province (Kelly, 2012). According to Moores and Duinker (1998), consensus was expected to be the main approach to decision-making in the planning teams. Kelly (2012) points out the two main policy objectives highlighted by the EPR: “ecosystem-based management, including adaptive management” and “inclusive public participation” (p. 27). She refers to these two objectives as being obviously linked since the EPR states that “adaptive forest ecosystem management requires the involvement of all stakeholders with an interest in the local forest land” (DNR 1995. p. 7).

Apart from the 1990 Forestry Act, there are several other pieces of legislation and strategies, both at the provincial and federal levels, which impact upon forest management in the province, whether directly or indirectly (Kelly, 2012). In terms of provincial legislation, policies such as the Endangered Species Act (SNL 2001 c E-10.1) and the Water Resources Act (SNL 2002 c W-4.01) have the potential to directly impact forest management, since these policies aim to conserve non-timber resources. Likewise, the Provincial Parks Act (RSNL 1990 c P-32) and the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act (RSNL 1990 c W-9), which establish parks and reserves could lead to a reduction in

harvesting base, and therefore also impact forestry management. The Crown Lands Act (SNL 1991 c 36) and the Urban and Rural Planning Act (SNL 2000 c U-8) could also impact forestry, albeit on a less significant scale (Kelly, 2012). Additionally, the Forest Land Management and Taxation Act of 1975 is responsible for the current forest management structure, with various forest management districts and the requirement for forest management plans (PSFMS, 2014, p. 15). Additionally, according to Kelly (2012), “The provincial policies for DNR-Forestry and for other agencies overlap on the same land base, creating a complex decision-making environment and overlapping, sometimes conflicting, obligations among agencies.” (p. 29)

Although federal legislation, by its very nature, is often directed at the actions of the federal government, Kelly (2012) suggests that the Species at Risk Act (2002 c 24-29) has some level of impact on forest management in the province.

The shift in the forest management regime in Newfoundland and Labrador has led to a completely different approach in terms of involving citizens in decision-making. As Moores & Duinker (1998) state, “In a few short years, forest-management planning in Newfoundland and Labrador has moved from essentially no public participation to a vigorous program of seeking public input. The transition was long overdue, and it has come with significant growing pains” (p. 873).

3.1 Overview of Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy 2014 – 2024

Newfoundland and Labrador’s Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy 2014 – 2024 is subtitled, ‘Growing our Renewable and Sustainable Forest Economy’, to highlight the province’s focus on ensuring that forests are managed sustainably. Over the years, forest management in Newfoundland and Labrador, and indeed throughout the world, has evolved based on changing public sentiments over time. Currently, consumers, as well as various stakeholders, place great importance on ecological sustainability and overall protection of the environment; the strategy document mirrors these sentiments, focusing on policies that are ecologically sound (PSFMS, 2014). The document is the overarching guide that governs the management of the forests in the province.

There are three main sections highlighted in the 2014 – 2024 strategy document: ‘The Nature and Extent of our Forest Resources’, ‘Sustainable Forest Management’, and ‘Sustainable Harvest Levels and the Forest Industry’. Below, I will provide a summary of the content outlined in each of these sections.

3.1.1 The Nature and Extent of our Forest Resources

This section of the document provides details of the forests of Newfoundland and Labrador, highlighting information on the boreal forest, the size, composition, and major features of the province’s forests, the ecoregions of the province, as well as an overview of the various forest management zones and districts throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

According to the strategy document, the total area of Newfoundland is 11.1 million hectares (ha), with 5.2 ha of that area being forested land, while 18 million ha of Labrador's total area of 29 million ha is forested. The strategy lists Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* [L.] Mill) as the most abundant tree in Newfoundland and the second most abundant in Labrador. Black spruce (*Picea mariana* [Mill.] B.S.P.) is also listed as one of the most dominant species in the forests of both Newfoundland and Labrador (PSFMS, 2014).

The province has a total of 20 ecoregions, nine in the island of Newfoundland and 11 in Labrador. "The ecoregions are a product of the geology and climate of a particular region, but they are characterized by the plant and animal communities that have developed as a consequence of these biophysical factors" (PSFMS, 2014, p. 14). All of these ecoregions are described as diverse, and preserving the diversity of these ecoregions is seen as "essential to preserving the biodiversity and the resource production capacity of our province's forests" (PSFMS, 2014, p. 14). The Central and Western Newfoundland Ecoregions are areas where commercial forestry mainly exists. The strategy document points out that the forest management policies of the province are selected based on "ecoregion-specific dynamics" (PSFMS, 2014, p. 14). There are 18 forest management districts (FMDs) in Newfoundland and six in Labrador. FMDs that share common ecoregion characteristics are combined to form planning zones in Newfoundland, while management planning is conducted at the district level in Labrador.

3.1.2 Sustainable Forest Management

This component of the strategy explains the guiding philosophy on which the management of the forests of the province is based. Additionally, this section outlines relevant ecological values as well as social and non-timber economic values, and also highlights the importance of public engagement in ensuring the success of the strategy. Each of the main strategy priorities are explained, and assigned an activity, a goal and an indicator, making the strategy measurable and thereby facilitating accountability.

Adaptive management is the predominant philosophy that drives the 2014-2024 strategy. The document states that the Forest Services Branch (FSB) will employ adaptive management and applied research to aid in refining its forest management policies, with the goal of having improved sustainable forest management practices. A reduction in land use conflicts and a reduction in cost per ha for forest management are highlighted as the indicators of success for this particular goal.

It is pointed out in the document that a main objective of the strategy is to provide clear parameters through streamlined, consistent guidelines for business while lessening the likelihood of risks not only to the environment but also to industry. The FSB also highlights its commitment to professionalism, pledging to “improve informatics systems to support our staff in the delivery of these complex and technical services” (PSFMS, 2014, p. 21). The goal of this strategic direction is to improve the delivery of public services, with the indicator being reduced response times on requests for information by frontline forest

managers. In the document, it is also highlighted that the PSFMS employs many of the principles developed in Labrador's District 19a forest management plan, which is internationally recognized (PSFMS, 2014).

A range of ecological values are reflected in the strategy document, with a specific activity, goal and indicator for each, all with the aim of maintaining provincial ecosystems amid the utilization of forest resources. The ecological values outlined in the strategy document are:

- Large Intact Landscapes - These are Special Forest Management Areas (SFMA) including, a Commercial Forest Management Area (CFMA), Intact Landscape Forest Management Areas (ILFMA), and Dynamic Species Specific Areas (DSSA).
- Connectivity of Forest Habitat
- Aquatic Ecosystems
- Late-succession Forests
- Rare Species and Species at Risk
- Climate Change (Carbon Accounting and Climate Change Research)
- Forest Protection
- Silviculture
- Forest Health (Introduced Species and Biomass Harvesting)

The social and non-timber economic values highlighted in the strategy are:

- Aboriginal Peoples
- Public Education

- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

With the aim of improving accountability and transparency in the forest management process, the FSB pledged that the province will implement the ISO 14001 Environmental Monitoring System and explore the feasibility of forest certification. Additionally, the FSB plans to periodically update the Environmental Protection Guidelines based on improvements in the environmental management rules and will publish a State of the Forest Report at the halfway mark of the strategy document (2019) and at the strategy's completion in 2024.

3.1.3 Sustainable Harvest Levels and the Forest Industry

This section of the strategy document provides an update on the status of the forest sector in Newfoundland and Labrador, including details of the main sectors within the forest products industry and the overall performance of the forest industry in the province in recent years. Information is also provided on the status of wood supply, and steps to be taken toward sustainable industry development.

The strategy document states that the forest products industry in Newfoundland and Labrador comprises four main sectors: pulp and paper, sawmilling, value added manufacturing, and wood energy. According to the PSFMS (2014), approximately 5500 jobs (both direct and indirect) were generated by the forest industry in 2012, while the industry consumed about 1.3 million cubic meter (m³) of local timber in producing wood

products worth \$259 million. In terms of the status of wood supply, one strategy direction is to continue to develop the Forest Resource Inventory, a database that “holds an estimate of the total volume of fibre available for the inventoried portion of the island and Labrador” (PSFMS, 2014, p. 42). Additionally, the FSB pledged to integrate products and species into the provincial wood supply analyses, with the goal of providing forest managers with estimates of the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) by species and potential end use (PSFMS, 2014).

The strategy outlines several key initiatives to facilitate sustainable industry development: permitting and licensing, fibre allocation, forest resource transportation, community forests, promoting wood products, and a Forest Industry Development Strategy, which was to be prepared by 2015. Some industry innovations being invested in by the FSB are also highlighted; these are: bioenergy, biorefining, and value-added solid wood products. The quantifying of the economic value of domestic forest use is also a strategy direction, as well as working with producers of non-timber forest products to incorporate those industries into forest management planning (PSFMS, 2014).

Finally, the strategy advocates a strong research and development program to guide the province through transformations in the forest industry. It pledges to continue to deliver on the Provincial Forest Research Strategy, which was released by the Centre for Forest Science and Innovation (CFSI) in 2010.

4 Chapter 4 - Methods

This section outlines the specific methods used in undertaking this research and the rationales for these specific choices. Additionally, it describes how interviewees were selected and how the interview process was carried out. I also highlight the specific case selected for the case study.

This research employs qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The author selected qualitative methods because they are better suited to achieving the desired goal of a detailed understanding of the issues. Yin (2009) suggests that qualitative methods of research allow for descriptive analysis of issues; it was therefore logical to select this route. Apart from being the most suitable way of answering the research questions in a detailed manner, a qualitative approach, such as the case study outlined herein, also allowed the author to pull data from a number of sources (Yin, 2009). Another reason qualitative methods were utilized was that such methods aid in uncovering emerging themes and insights, and help with a broad understanding of issues (Patton, 2002).

The research design uses an exploratory case study strategy to consider a specific participatory process in environmental decision-making in Newfoundland and Labrador, that of the 2012 public participation process that led to the 2014 – 2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS). The case study method is useful in allowing for in-depth understanding of a phenomenon; case studies also facilitate a full appreciation of the context in which the phenomenon took place (Punch, 1998).

4.1 Overview of Case Study

The consultation process for the development of the 2014-2024 strategy took place throughout 2012² and involved as its main stakeholders, members of the general public, environmental groups, forest industry representatives, aboriginal groups and forest researchers/scientists. Stakeholders who participated in that process were invited to attend consultation events to share ideas and concerns regarding the province's ten-year Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS).

The Forestry Services Branch (FSB) of the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency (FAA) is responsible for managing and regulating the forest resources of the province, and were tasked with managing the participation process and developing the strategy. A team of three individuals from the FSB comprised the main committee with oversight responsibility for the process.

Six public consultation sessions were conducted in separate communities across the province between February and March 2012; these communities included: Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander, Plum Point, St. John's, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

² One session – consultation with the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited - was held in January 2013.

Figure 2 – Map of Newfoundland and Labrador



Source: Newfoundland Climate and Weather. Retrieved from <http://www.weather-in-canada-observer.com/newfoundland-climate.html>

A two-day workshop was also held with environmental organizations³ in March 2012, while two consultation sessions were held with representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Lumber Producers Association (in December 2012) and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited (in January 2013). Representatives of the FSB also met separately with the

³ Two academics from Memorial University were also present at this workshop.

NunatuKavut Community Council, Inc., the Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu Nation in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in October 2012.

Representatives of the FSB facilitated the general public consultation sessions, as at that time, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) was not yet established. The sessions included a presentation by the FSB representatives that outlined background information and current status of forestry in Newfoundland and Labrador, and a description of components that would need to be addressed in the strategy. The workshop for the environmental groups was facilitated by a representative from Model Forest NL and a forestry researcher/academic.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

Within the case study, the collection of data involved the use of two methods: document analysis and formal, semi-structured interviews. The public participation best practice framework developed by Reed (2008) guided the data collection, with the eight best practices serving as the themes that guided the analysis of the documents and the basis of development of the questions for the interviews. A process of triangulation was carried out by repeating questions with different participants and comparing responses with data from the document analysis (Russell and Harshbarger, 2003).

The document analysis segment of the data collection commenced upon the receipt of documents related to the public participation process, which were sourced from the

representatives of the Forest Services Branch (FSB) who managed the process. The documents received included, presentation slides that were presented at each consultation session by the FSB representatives, notes from the discussions that took place at the sessions held with the environmental stakeholders, an overview of discussion points from all the consultation sessions, and a consultation schedule. The researcher was unable to receive the actual consultation plan for the process, as the Communications Unit of the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency explained that they required approval to do so and such approval was not forthcoming up until the time of publication of this document.

Yin (1994, 2009) suggest that document analysis is particularly appropriate in case studies. The document review was conducted first to allow for an understanding of the objectives of the FSB in entering the consultation process, an idea of what took place at the actual sessions, and an overview of the department's thoughts of the process at the end. According to Corbin & Strauss (2008), a document analysis helps to produce meaning and develop practical knowledge from the reviewing and interpreting of data.

After document analysis, formal, semi-structured interviews with participants, facilitators and decision-makers were conducted to verify information gleaned from the document analysis, and to get their personal views on the public participation process. According to Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995), the formal semi-structured interview allows researchers to use both a structured approach as well as a more 'conversational' style in order to answer the research questions. With this method, the author was able to

ask clarifying questions based on the interviewees' responses; which aided in gathering meaningful data.

Similar questions were asked of most stakeholders, with the only significant differences being the decision-makers and facilitators, who were asked questions pertinent to their leading roles in the process. The interview questions were geared toward unearthing the answers to the three overarching research questions outlined earlier.

The range of interview questions examined the participants' views on whether the best practices criteria put forward by Reed are seen as important for public engagement processes. They also gauged participants' thoughts on the 2012 public engagement process, determining what components were perceived as missing in the process. Participants were also asked what should be done differently in the future, which resulted in attributes that they consider to be essential to the process.

Interviews ranged in duration from 20 – 90 minutes depending on the interviewee's memory of the event and experience with forest management planning processes in general. Permission was sought from each participant to use a voice recorder to record the interview, and all participants agreed to be recorded. A total of 15 interviews were conducted. Of this number, a total of four interviews were conducted in person at a time and place convenient to the participant. The remaining 11 participants requested to be interviewed via telephone or Skype, based on time constraints and/or scheduling difficulties. All audio recordings were kept in a password-protected computer that is only accessible to the researcher.

The individuals selected for the interviews had participated in the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS) public consultation process that took place in 2012; these include relevant stakeholders, facilitators, and decision-makers. For the purpose of this research, the relevant stakeholders were the stakeholders recognized by the process being examined, namely:

- representatives from the forest industry, such as business owners, business association members and consultants;
- representatives from environmental non-governmental organizations and interest groups;
- forestry researchers/scientists or academicians;
- and members of the general public (citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador).

Facilitators were the individuals who were tasked with facilitating the consultation process being considered, and decision-makers, in this context, were the members of the government branch (FSB), who were responsible for managing the consultation process and developing the 2014 – 2024 PSFMS document.

Interviewees were selected using purposive sampling based on a list of participants detailed in the appendices of the 2014-2024 PSFMS document. Special attention was paid to ensuring representation from all the stakeholder groups that were a part of the process. In so doing, interviewees were randomly selected from the list of participants, based on their stakeholder grouping. Therefore, each group of stakeholder was represented. Four

environmental representatives, two decision-makers, two industry representatives, two citizens, two forestry researchers/academicians, one facilitator, and two aboriginal representatives were interviewed. The breakdown of interviewees based on stakeholder groups, along with accompanying acronyms that will be used to identify participants throughout this document is outlined below.

Demographic information was not a key area of note in this research. The only defining characteristic of participants that was considered relevant to the research is the stakeholder group to which the interviewee belongs. Other identifying information may be relevant, but are beyond the scope of this research.

Table 4: List of interviewees by stakeholder group and identifier

Stakeholder group	Identifier
Environmental representatives Total - 4	ENV-1
	ENV-2
	ENV-3
	ENV-4
Provincial decision-makers Total - 2	DM-1
	DM-2
Facilitator - 1	FAC
Industry representatives	IND-1

Total - 2	IND-2
Aboriginal representatives	AB-1
Total - 2	AB-2
Forest researchers/Academicians	FOR-R1
Total - 2	FOR-R2
General public	GP-1
Total - 2	GP-2
Total Interviewees - 15	

4.3 Data Analysis

Using a mixture of both an inductive and a deductive approach, a thematic analysis of the data was conducted, to allow the identification and analysis of patterns within the data in the form of themes. According to Guest, MacQueen & Namey (2012), such analyses do not simply count common words or phrases, rather there is emphasis on recognizing and describing concepts that are both implicit and explicit within the data. Thematic analysis is considered by many to be the most useful in “capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set” (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 11).

A Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), Nvivo 11, was used to aid in the data analysis process. The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher

and the transcription documents entered into Nvivo. The next step was that of coding the data. Coding is defined by Lockyer (2004) as “a systematic way in which to condense extensive data sets into smaller analyzable units through the creation of categories and concepts derived from the data” (para. 1). In NVivo, coding involves arranging related ideas into ‘nodes’. The transcripts were read and sections considered to be noteworthy were coded to new nodes. Initially, sections of transcripts specifically related to Reed’s best practices were sought out for initial coding; however, throughout the process other themes emerged as well. Throughout the coding process, I created memos to track my thoughts about the emerging themes, how they connect to each other, and whether they were related to Reed’s best practices.

NVivo was useful, due to some of its functionalities, such as running queries related to the data and viewing the emerging patterns in charts. However, in general, the use of NVivo did not simplify the analysis process, as, the process of learning to use the software was very time consuming.

5 Chapter 5 – Results

This chapter outlines the findings of the data analysis of both the interview responses and the document analysis. With the aim of providing answers to the research questions specified at the beginning of this thesis, the findings are outlined in detail. The chapter begins with highlights of the results based on the eight best practices put forward by Reed

(2008), with two specific areas of focus – whether the criterion is seen as important to Newfoundland and whether the criterion was evident in the 2012 PSFMS public participation process. The discussion then turns to the themes that were not highlighted in Reed’s framework, but emerged as important from the interviews and document analysis of the OPE public engagement guidelines.

5.1 Findings on Reed’s Best Practice Framework

5.1.1 Best practice 1 - Stakeholder participation needs to be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust and learning

This best practice criterion was seen as one of the most important by the respondents. Components of empowerment, equity, trust and learning were mentioned by all interviewees as critical to a successful participative process. Overall, empowerment and learning were highlighted as most important by research participants, as they constantly referenced these themes throughout the interviews. All four of these themes are discussed further below.

5.1.1.1 Empowerment

The issue of empowerment was a recurring theme in the data collected for this research. Several participants stated the importance of being able to have an impact on decisions, in keeping with Reed’s assertion that participants should have the power to influence decisions.

One of two industry representatives, as well as members of the public and aboriginal groups felt that there was no real opportunity to influence the decisions made during the public participation process in question, as they thought the plans presented by FSB at the outset appeared to have already been decided on. On the other hand, one industry representative and the environmental representatives felt that although the DNR presented a proposed direction, the process provided an opportunity for them as participants to influence the decisions. These individuals also believed that their ideas were considered, regardless of whether they were included in the final strategy document.

Another issue referenced by Reed, in terms of empowerment is ensuring that participants have the technical capability to engage effectively with the decision. All participants shared the view that this was indeed an important aspect of successful participation. Some interviewees from the environmental and industry groups expressed concern that some of the members of the public that participated in the PSFMS public participation sessions were not well informed about forestry related issues and, as such, they did not provide any meaningful input at the sessions.

“What I recall is that there were some people who were providing uninformed advice. It is clear that some people had no knowledge of the issues, and they were making very unhelpful comments” (FOR-R2).

They posited that perhaps this could have been avoided if relevant educational information was sent out to the public prior to the sessions. This is in keeping with Reed’s point that

efforts should be made to educate participants and develop their knowledge and confidence level, especially in cases of technical decisions, in order to ensure meaningful engagement.

“Maybe a little more preparation ahead of time, so that when it’s time for the sessions people are more aware of what’s going on. If people don’t know what’s going on, it might be harder for them to become engaged” (FOR-R1).

5.1.1.2 Equity & Trust

Participants were aware that both equity and trust are important to the success of a participative process. For several industry representatives and environmental groups, they expressed that a lack of trust could lead to non-participation in participative processes. Some environmental representatives and members of the public were critical of past forest management planning processes in Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically, the 5-year district level planning process. They suggested that issues of inequity, with a perception of government favouring industry in these processes, have led to distrust of the managers of the process and a lack of motivation to participate in that process.

Notably however, most participants did not feel that there were issues of inequity and distrust in the 10-year planning process. The issue of power inequalities in the process was raised by four interviewees. These respondents, a member of the public, two aboriginal representatives, and a member of industry, perceived that the government representatives were the only real influencers of decisions in this process, and felt that their presentation of a direction for the strategy document at the consultation signaled that a decision had already been made, which led to distrust of the managers of the process and the process itself.

“They say they consulted but really it’s not true. I think the government came with a strategy already in mind and there wasn’t much we could do about it. So, taking part did not make me feel involved in developing the strategy because it just seemed that they were doing consultations because they needed to; it didn’t seem genuine” (GP-2).

“Public consultation was a required part of the strategy development process. I question their commitment to use the input that was being put forward as opposed to their own mindset at the time as to what that strategy should be” (IND – 2).

5.1.1.3 Learning

Learning was seen by interviewees as a defining factor of success in participative processes.

In keeping with suggestions from the literature that participation should allow for two-way learning between participants, many respondents pointed out that there was value in such sessions based on the opportunities for learning.

Many of the interviewees indicated that the 2012 consultation process was a success based solely on the fact that they were able to hear the viewpoints of other stakeholders and get a broader understanding of the issue. The industry researchers/scientists indicated that their main reason for attending the sessions was to learn more about the strategy development process and the forest values of interest to the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador.

“I wanted to see what forest values were out there. I’ve participated in several such sessions before and the people are usually the same people and often repeat several

issues. So I went to be aware of what values were being expressed in terms of managing the land” (FOR-R2).

“For me it was hearing about where they were going and the thoughts of others in the audience. As a scientist, it’s important for me to understand people’s expectations so I can target my research towards what people want” (FOR-R1).

5.1.2 Best practice 2 - Stakeholder participation should be considered as early as possible and throughout the process

The perspectives of interviewees were split concerning this best practice criterion. On one hand, most participants see value in being involved in a participative process from conception through to completion. Interviewees who are of this view include aboriginal representatives, environmental representatives, one industry representative and one member of the general public.

“Government needs to sit down with everybody involved from the get go and get their concerns; not to draft the plan and then ask for their input. We should be involved in developing the plan. Consultation is involvement from the beginning of the plan through to implementation” (AB-1).

Although they recognize the value of stakeholders being involved throughout the lifespan of a participative process, the remaining interviewees indicated that time constraints would make such involvement almost impossible. Several respondents suggested that they be

brought in when there is some sort of document developed to actually look at and comment on as a starting point.

“I think them putting forward their plans really starts the discussion among stakeholders” (IND-1).

This is how the 2012 PSFMS process was conducted, with participants invited to provide suggestions while being informed of a proposed direction for the plan. One decision-maker explained that this was seen as the ideal way to go.

“Well, we did give very generally the direction that we were going, but that came from us as forest managers listening to the views of the different groups over the years. So in determining the direction, we looked at these considerations since we have been involved in the 5 year plan and other settings where we would have heard from the public. We felt like the public needed something to respond to. I know for a fact that they didn’t want to come in cold. But the initial presentation and direction came from listening over the years. There has to be some direction” (DM-1).

Individuals who favoured this format however, emphasized the need for more rigorous discussions at sessions, highlighting that there should be a truly deliberative process where the issues brought forward are discussed and some level of consensus or compromise reached. These individuals also stressed being informed of progress throughout the process, highlighting the need for follow-up after the sessions.

“They present ideas for the strategy and we give our opinion on it, however what they take into consideration, we do not know” (IND-1).

5.1.3 Best Practice 3 - Relevant stakeholders need to be analyzed and represented systematically

Interviewees indicated that this is an important criterion to the success of participatory initiatives. Identifying the persons who are relevant to the decision being made is seen as essential, as is involving them in the participation process. However, one respondent suggested that it was counterproductive to involve individuals who have no knowledge of forestry issues.

“I don’t think many people there really understood the issues well. I know in public consultations, you have to consult the general public, but the input that’s provided will only be good if people have an understanding and knowledge of the issues” (ENV-1).

This respondent suggested that in cases like these the onus is on the managers of the process to distinguish between what is meaningful and what and who is not.

“The public should be consulted, but when you’re seeking information about a particular issue, you need to engage the people that are closest to the issue, that have knowledge and experience in the issue, whether scientific or a person in the industry, and that I think will be your most meaningful input. But in a democratic process, we can’t isolate anybody, so I think you still need to have a public meeting

to see what the general public have to say, but you should be able to distinguish between someone with a good understanding of the issue and those who don't. A good manager is able to distinguish between what's required to protect the resource and what people want and sometimes it's not possible to deliver both" (ENV-1).

Most interviewees reported a good mixture of stakeholders represented throughout the process.

"There was a wide array of ideas put forward from academic, conservation, alternative forestry practices, First Nations, etc. For such a small group, it was good to have so many different issues represented" (FOR-R1).

Based on the analysis of documents related to the 2012 PSFMS public participation process as well as interviews with decision-makers, there was little evidence of systematic analysis of relevant stakeholders, however it was evident that the managers of the process were knowledgeable about the values and knowledge base of some of the stakeholder groups. Organizers of the process believe that all relevant stakeholder groups were represented in the process, and there were separate sessions undertaken for three main stakeholder groups - environmental representatives, industry representatives, and aboriginal groups.

"External to government I think we captured all the relevant stakeholders. Concurrent to that we were also exploring avenues within government, such as tourism – impact on landscapes, fish and wildlife – core concerns about habitat. Time didn't allow but we could have had more focussed discussions about the plan because we have many other government agencies that are impacted by the plan.

Maybe a facilitated discussion like we had with the environmental groups” (DM-1).

It was clear from discussions with the managers of the process as well as documentary evidence, that there was significant understanding of the values of the environmental groups and the aboriginal groups based in Labrador. This appears to be due to intimate knowledge of these groups based on years of interaction and significant engagement between these groups and the forest managers/decision-makers.

“We get the message. It’s a small province and people have been vocal in the past and those concerns surfaced at the meetings. And the known public concerns that we were hearing over the past 10 years influenced the direction of the plan. Sometimes these sessions are organized ways of bringing the message to government, so if you were listening all along, you would have heard these concerns before. One of the philosophies we brought to the process is that we as forest managers were losing ground in terms of our credibility over the past 25 years, and we wanted to show that we could be good environmental stewards. So the plan was to show that we were world-class environmental managers, and with that we decided that we would interact closely with the environmental groups. We had many meetings with a small group of ENGOs in St. John’s outside of the environmental sessions. That was a main piece of our strategy” (DM-1).

However, the aboriginal groups of Newfoundland were disappointed by the process as they were not involved in the aboriginal session, but rather invited to the general sessions.

“We were only invited to an information session, not a consultation. We really didn’t have any input in the strategy. In all these strategies in different environmental areas, indigenous people’s concerns are low on the list of what’s important” (AB-1).

5.1.4 Best Practice 4 - Clear objectives for the participatory process need to be agreed among stakeholders at the outset

While this best practice criterion was seen as important by interviewees, it was not reflected in the 2012 PSFMS public participation process. Interviewees acknowledged the need for every participant in such a process to be aware of the purpose of participation as well as the specific goals of engaging each stakeholder. Some respondents indicated that this would allow the participants to have realistic expectations of the outcomes of the process. For instance, the importance of having clear objectives so as to clarify expectations of stakeholder groups was highlighted.

“A lot of people don’t think it is as meaningful as it could be if it were a blank slate. When a puzzle is given to you and it’s already 95 per cent complete and you fill in the 5 per cent, you don’t feel like you did the puzzle. Is that why public is invited to the sessions? Perhaps it’s not and then they shouldn’t be told that this is your forest and this is your session, what do you want to have done. What they should

be told is that this is the way that the government feels the forest should be managed over the next few years, what do you think of it? There were also lots of areas in which there could be two-way communication back and forth on the objectives. And that's where facilitation is important to really discuss the issues. But, don't fool people into thinking that they are anything more than what they are; they're a sounding board for ideas that the government wants to bring forward" (FAC).

The respondents had different ideas of what the purpose of the session was. If clear objectives are identified at the outset, it would minimize disappointment of participants in the process, as they would know what to expect going into the sessions.

In this particular case, the goals of the overall consultation process were developed by the decision-makers; these goals were then communicated to the participants at the various sessions that were held. Still, one decision-maker admits that the goals of the process might not have been clear enough.

"There were some people that criticized the plan for not having an economic component, but the plan was never about that. Maybe we failed on informing the public that that was not the focus" (DM-1).

5.1.5 Best Practice 5 - Methods should be selected and tailored to the decision-making context, considering the objectives, type of participants and appropriate level of engagement

The interviewees indicated that the selection of methods, based on the desired outcome of a process is essential. They also acknowledged the need to engage stakeholders using methods that are appropriate to the specific participants. Some interviewees suggested that not all stakeholders need to be engaged in the same way and at the same level. For instance, in this process, the decision-makers felt that some stakeholders needed to be engaged in more detailed discussions than others, such as the environmental groups and aboriginal groups.

“We did have a fairly in-depth consultation process with vested interests. Those were very interactive – they weren’t public but they were interactive, especially with the environmental groups. As well, we had some one-to-one consultations with the aboriginal groups, and that was interactive as well...We had many meetings with a small group of ENGOs in St. John’s outside of the environmental sessions. That was a main piece of our strategy” (DM-1).

Several interviewees suggested that participation would have been more meaningful if there were other methods included to augment the public sessions. Respondents suggested, for example, that having online submissions and discussions could have further informed the process. It was also suggested that individuals should have been allowed to participate via video conferencing from their homes, in order to reduce their cost of travel and the managers of the process would thereby boost involvement and engage a greater number of

individuals, without the added cost consideration for participants. One decision-maker pointed out that there would have been value in having other methods:

“I would have preferred a more informal approach that would have allowed citizens to just come in and speak from the floor. People had to pre-register and that would discourage some people in itself. The pre-registration might have been necessary for securing the right size room, but maybe the first hour could have been for presentations and have an open mic section afterward. It would have been more complicated for us in terms of the different issues that might come up, but I still think it would have been good to have more discussions. I would have liked to see a process that was led by the public, where the nature of discussions is determined by the public; because you can have facilitators and roundtables that are still scripted and not led by the public. I think having people prepare presentations, the climate is too controlled” (DM-1).

5.1.6 Best Practice 6 - Highly skilled facilitation is essential

This criterion was viewed to be of major significance to the interviewees. The respondents suggested that the role of facilitator determines the overall tone of a session and therefore impacts the level of success of the process. According to the interviewees, the most important attribute of a facilitator, is the perception of fairness. Interviewees suggested that once a facilitator appears willing to listen to the different perspectives that might emerge

in a session, then participants will feel free to raise concerns and will be effectively engaged in the session.

Another key characteristic is the level of knowledge of the issue being discussed.

“Well, both facilitators were pretty knowledgeable about forestry, which was good. I can’t complain. They both did a good job of making sure everybody’s views were heard and documented” (ENV-1).

A few participants believed that facilitators should be neutral parties.

“It’s better to have a neutral agency responsible for facilitating the sessions because it could be biased between forest manager within an area and what he wants done, not necessarily what the individuals within that area wants. The only problem is that a neutral agency may not have the expertise, so it has to be someone involved in the forest industry” (GP-1).

“Maybe if there were independent consultations done. Like, if the process was led by an independent body. Like I said, a lot of the people in the government department are trained foresters so their views might be a bit biased. If you’re looking for new ideas, then you have to talk to people who see things differently” (ENV-1).

However, most participants indicated that the neutrality of a facilitator is only necessary in situations of clear or potential conflicts. Otherwise, as long as the facilitator appears balanced, not favouring one perspective over the other, and seems willing to listen to the

different viewpoints, then those respondents have no issue with a facilitator being a government representative. Most individuals noted however, that it is not ideal that the facilitator is also the actual person making the final decisions. So, while respondents have no issue with government representatives facilitating such sessions, they would prefer if the facilitator is not from the specific department or team making the final decision.

Some respondents also raised the issue of facilitators being trained for the role, having specific skills such as negotiation or conflict resolution. This they see as vital in specifically conflictual cases, where in-depth negotiation is necessary. Within this process, the FSB representatives tasked with developing the strategy were also the ones who acted in the role of facilitator for most of the sessions. The sessions held with the environmental groups were the only ones that had facilitators that were not government representatives. The facilitators for those sessions had years of experience in forest management, with one trained in facilitation and one a researcher/academician specializing in forestry.

Some interviewees raised the issue that the DNR representatives seemed a bit rushed in managing the participation process.

“I had the impression that maybe a lot of it was ongoing, like they were trying to do it simultaneously – write the strategy and have the consultations. They seemed like they were under pressure...probably deadlines; like they were trying to fit everything in all at the same time” (ENV-2).

The issue of whether the DNR representatives were trained in facilitation techniques was also raised.

“I felt like maybe the people tasked with doing it, may not have experience in public participation; like, they might have been told to do that and not necessarily have done it before” (ENV-2).

5.1.7 Best Practice 7 - Local and scientific knowledge should be integrated

Interviewees expressed the need for a balancing of both local and scientific knowledge in participative processes relating to environmental management. It was highlighted that it is useful to have such an interaction to aid in the iterative, two-way learning that should be taking place in such processes. The forest researchers/scientists indicated that they saw the value in hearing the concerns and values of citizens, but advised that scientific experts should be included at some point in the participative process to clarify misconceptions and educate persons to help in making the process more meaningful.

“Some people have uninformed positions and you can identify those persons. It’s often interesting to hear these different opinions, and it’s good to have a scientific perspective to clarify any misunderstandings. It perhaps would have been good to have a briefing session, where experts are on hand to really discuss the issues. That would have been helpful, but that’s a big logistical request to have different experts involved in a process like that” (FOR-R2).

Groups such as the aboriginal representatives advocated for decision-makers and scientists to provide an avenue for discussions with elders and other knowledgeable members of the aboriginal community.

“To have the people that are out on the ground every day come in and help develop that plan; I think that’s the best way. People with hands-on in the field will help build a strong plan. The elders think that government doesn’t listen to them as they think they don’t know anything, while on the other hand the elders can tell that the environment is changing; they see a difference in caribou migration or how the animals act in general and these changes are as a result of changes in the environment due to logging or so. The elders would be good assets to helping to inform the plan. Sometimes it’s good to have government facilitating, because they get a chance to hear what the people from the communities have to say” (AB-2).

The participation process being examined was not specifically designed to have in-depth discussions that could lead to clarification of issues, as it was more focused on hearing the concerns of participants, rather than discussing them to the point of clarification or resolution. It did however provide the space for both local and scientific issues to be presented.

“The sessions were not designed to be an informed discussion of the issues that were raised; it was more about getting feedback on the strategy and the direction forward. So, if it was a simple issue that could be clarified with a simple answer, that would be done, but most of the discussion was about moving ahead with the strategy” (FOR-R2).

5.1.8 Best Practice 8 - Participation needs to be institutionalized

The institutionalization of participation was raised by interviewees in several different ways; this suggests that the criterion is an important one for persons who participated in the planning process for the 10 year PSFMS.

All interview respondents expressed the need for participation initiatives in forest management to be continued. They pointed out however that improvements need to be made in order to ensure greater levels of success of the process and to motivate relevant stakeholders to continue to participate in the process.

I think they should have come out with a consultation process that was at least twice as long as this one was, and the amount of resources that was available put all the onus on one or two people within the provincial government. I think this strategy document should have been shared with all the divisions and districts of the province and the district managers and directors should have all been brought into it. I believe the consultation process should have more broadly engaged management throughout government, because when you do that more ownership goes with the people that will bring this document to their areas; whereas now they're in a more comfortable position to criticize the document because they weren't involved in its development. They should have extended the consultation process to those responsible for these districts and then there should be a neutral facilitator who facilitates the sessions in these specific districts. There are 22 districts, each with a district manager, and then a director and the assistant deputy

minister. Why are you taking 2 individuals from a separate department and having them develop the document and leaving out these managers? (FAC)

Additionally, as mentioned by Reed (2008), several respondents thought it important to have some level of commitment from decision-makers to follow-through on the outcomes of participatory processes.

“One criticism was that we didn’t do what we said we were going to do in the last strategy, so the auditor general was very critical that we didn’t deliver on what we said we were going to do. So a part of this plan has an accountability component built in, that we will do more reporting and let people know what we’re doing. This was equal to the plan itself” (DM-1).

However, as also referenced in the literature, interviewees understand that such commitment would require a change in the way government agencies and departments operate. With an understanding that such a change would take place over time, the respondents viewed the commitments to public engagement, monitoring and accountability in the final 2014-2024 PSFMS document as a step in the right direction. They expressed that they are watching to see whether there will be due diligence and follow-through on these strategic priorities.

“We’re just waiting to see whether there will be follow through on this strategy. One of the points from the strategy was to improve the district level planning and we have yet to see steps towards that, so we’re waiting to see” (ENV-4).

5.2 Themes that emerged as important to the Newfoundland and Labrador context

5.2.1 Participation processes should be well promoted to ensure maximum involvement from the public

Where the general public is identified as a stakeholder, such as in forest management where citizens have the potential to be affected by and to affect decisions, most respondents assert that such participation initiatives should be properly advertised to those citizens. The interviewees suggested that the managers of the process should promote upcoming public engagement sessions in advance of the actual events, allowing members of the general public to plan towards attending such sessions.

Additionally, they point out that advertisements should be done in the local media and at a time and place where it is likely to be seen by a majority of the targeted participants.

“Obviously it should be publicly announced. It should be reported in local newspapers and television and radio ads so people can know about it in advance and truly benefit from it” (GP-1).

Also, one respondent suggested that citizens be contacted directly through specific mailing lists.

“I’m not sure what kinds of advertisements were done to invite the general public to these sessions. My suggestion is they could keep a running list of members of the

public who have attended these sessions before and create a mailing list for future consultations” (ENV-3).

The public sessions of the participation process being reviewed were not perceived as properly advertised, with the general public representatives interviewed learning of the sessions based on connections with individuals in the forest industry. Most of the interviewees were unable to recall actually seeing or hearing an advertisement for the session in the local media.

“It was pure luck that I heard about them. I got an email through someone” (GP-1).

“It wasn’t advertised profusely, there was some media and mainly through the government websites” (DM-1).

5.2.2 Appropriate follow-up should be done with participants prior to the finalization of the decision

This theme emerged among several of the respondents, who felt that there was a lack of follow-up in the 2012 PSFMS public participation process. The participants pointed out that there is need to have such follow-up as it provides a sense that their input was valued and respected and this gives impetus to them participating in future participative processes.

“I feel like we were just a dot in the process. Several presentations at the same time and all these issues, and of course, our issue is important to us but everybody else’s issue is important to them too. There was no system of saying we can assure you that this will be considered or it’s important or anything like that. Anything that would give you some kind of feedback on the ideas you presented. So you know this won’t make it to the strategy or whatever” (IND-1).

According to interviewees, this follow-up should also include an assessment of the actual engagement process, indicating who attended the sessions and how they feel about the process. Such assessment could help to inform future participative processes.

“Well, I think the question is more about how you assess engagement and how you monitor, and that’s part of the strategy so that’s a good thing. The challenge is making sure you follow through and get a good sense of whether people are engaged, and what segment is not engaged and why not” (FOR-R1).

5.3 Overview of Public Engagement Guide from the Office of Public Engagement

The Office of Public Engagement includes the Public Engagement Branch, Voluntary and Non-Profit Engagement, Youth Engagement, and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Office. Established in October 2012, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) includes the Public Engagement Branch, which is tasked with supporting government departments and agencies with public engagement and collaboration efforts.

The Public Engagement Guide provides guidelines for engagement activities in the province. The document outlines a ‘spectrum of public engagement’, which involves a range of activities that can be used to engage citizens in the creation of policy. This includes, informing (where government provides the public with information), consulting (where government obtains input and feedback from the public), deliberating (where government works with the public to understand their views while sharing ideas of decision-makers), and co-creating (where government collaborates with organized stakeholders to develop solutions).

The activities that take place in each category of the spectrum are defined, and the document advises that engagement processes sometimes involve a combination of these activities across the spectrum.

According to the document, there are five main values that should be embraced in public engagement practices in the province. They are: accountability, transparency, respect, inclusiveness, and responsiveness. These are similar to some of the criteria outlined by Reed (2008). Best practice one, which underscores the need for a philosophy of empowerment, equity, trust and learning; best practice three – the need to analyze and represent relevant stakeholders; best practice four, which speaks to clear, agreed upon objectives; best practice six – the need for highly skilled facilitation; and best practice eight, which calls for the institutionalization of participation can all be considered reflective of the values outlined in the Guide.

The document points out the importance of clarifying the meaning of specific terms, such as ‘engagement’, ‘consultation’ and ‘involvement’, which are often used interchangeably, when communicating with the public. It points out that ‘consultation’ is one aspect of public engagement, explaining that there are three such levels – the consultative level, the deliberative level, and the action level. The ‘Consultative Level’ is where the views of the public are obtained, and includes methods such as public meetings and focus groups. The ‘Deliberative Level’ involves deliberating on issues with the views of the public and other pertinent information being considered. Workshops and deliberative polling are highlighted as two examples of deliberative methods. The ‘Action Level’ is where recommendations for action are actually developed with the involvement of stakeholders; this includes participatory decision-making and formal partnerships.

The guide goes on to highlight elements seen as important to meaningful participation.

These elements are:

- Sufficient notification of the engagement activity/process;
- Information that is comprehensible and accessible to the public;
- A reasonable timeline for participation (i.e. get out early to avoid the notion that a decision is already made);
- The appropriate level of engagement is utilized;
- Sensitivity to public/stakeholder values;
- The process is adaptive to the needs of participants; and,
- Results are transparent and communicated in a timely manner.

“The quality of the process depends on ensuring that these elements are respected and integrated into your public engagement activities” (Public Engagement Guide, p. 10). Again, these elements are reflected in Reed’s best practice criteria, and importantly, the two themes that emerged from the research (detailed in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2) are also observed in these elements. Specifically, the first and last elements listed above – sufficient notification of the engagement activity and transparent results communicated in a timely manner – clearly speak to the two emerging themes.

A section of this document deals with matching tools with the degree of engagement. It suggests that a decision regarding tools should be based on the goals of the process, the nature of the issue, the proposed participants, time commitments, cost, and the level of knowledge concerning the issue. The section also mentions benefits of utilizing technology to support public engagement initiatives.

Guidelines are provided for determining who should be involved in public engagement initiatives, with stakeholder mapping highlighted as a useful method for determining relevant stakeholders, while learning about stakeholders’ values and knowledge-levels at the same time. The document also provides advice on promoting public engagement events.

Importantly, communicating the results of engagement is listed as a fundamental tool in public participation. “Communicating results back to the public ensures that those who contributed understand how their insights and ideas were or were not acknowledged, understood and appreciated.” (Public Engagement Guide, p. 19). Information that could be

shared with participants is outlined, and includes: discussions; possible solutions considered; areas where opinions diverged and or converged; and how decision-makers were able to use the input received.

The document stresses the importance of evaluating participatory processes, highlighting the value in doing so. It suggests that evaluation should be built into the engagement process, so as to determine whether resources were used in an efficient and effective manner, and to ensure learning and allow for improvements in future processes.

6 Chapter 6 – Discussion

6.1 Applicability of Reed’s (2008) best practices criteria to the Newfoundland and Labrador context

Based on analysis, it is evident that the concepts outlined in Reed’s (2008) best practices are broadly applicable in the Newfoundland and Labrador landscape. Participants in this study suggest that the criteria outlined by Reed are essential to a successful participative process. Outside of Reed’s criteria however, the analysis revealed two other criteria seen as important to ensuring success within environmental public engagement initiatives.

Seven of the eight criteria asserted by Reed had general consensus on their level of importance to ensuring success in these processes. The second criterion, which suggests that stakeholders should be considered as early as possible and throughout the participatory

process, was seen as important by the majority of respondents, however, while all participants agreed with the idea of being involved throughout the process, there were differences in opinion regarding how early in the process participants should be engaged.

There were no major differences in how Reed's best practices criteria were viewed by the various stakeholder groups. As such, it was noted that decision-makers, environmental representatives, industry representatives, aboriginal groups, forestry researchers/scientists, and members of the general public, shared similar views regarding the importance of the criteria asserted by Reed (2008). The eight best practices outlined by Reed appear to be strongly linked and sometimes feed into each other. This link is further discussed below.

A philosophy of empowerment, equity, trust and learning is considered critical in participatory processes related to environmental management in the province. Study participants emphasized that processes supported by such a philosophy will not only be considered as successful by the stakeholders engaged, but will ensure that those stakeholders are motivated to participate in future engagement initiatives. When stakeholders are empowered to influence decisions, and are treated fairly throughout the process of engagement, then trust in the managers of the process and the process itself is developed. The results of this research support the suggestion of other scholars that a process that is trusted is seen as fair and balanced and will result in participants learning from each other, thus making the process a richer, more successful one.

All the remaining criteria appear to feed into the first. As such, in order to facilitate this philosophy of empowerment, equity, trust, and learning, the second criteria must also be upheld. Based on the findings of this research, some participants are flexible in terms of how soon they need to be involved in public engagement processes, however most respondents would like to be involved from the outset and all respondents consider it ideal to be engaged throughout the duration of the process, through to the implementation and monitoring of the outcome or decisions emerging from the process.

The third and fourth best practices are very clearly linked to the second. Determining relevant stakeholders, their knowledge levels and values, is essential in any participation exercise, and it is important to make such a determination as an initial step in the process. Once stakeholders are decided upon, involving them in the creation of clear objectives will help in fostering the underpinning philosophy mentioned in best practice one and will lessen the likelihood that participants will be disappointed in the process, as they would enter the engagement process with realistic expectations of the process and outcomes.

Best practice five is also linked to best practices two to four, and will undoubtedly impact best practice one. The nature and context of the decision, the stakeholders selected to be involved, and the objectives agreed upon with the involvement of these stakeholders will all influence the method selected for engagement. Once the method is selected, the quality of the facilitation (best practice six) conducted at engagement events will determine how participants perceive the process and the managers of the process (level of trust). This suggests direct impact of both best practices five and six on best practice one.

Best practice seven, which advocates for the integration of local and scientific knowledge is inextricably linked to the philosophy of learning mentioned in best practice one. It is through this continuous two-way exchange of information between participants who have different knowledge bases and different experiences, as well as participants and the managers of the process, that true learning will take place. As indicated by several of the participants in this study, participative processes are sometimes perceived as successful based on the knowledge that is garnered by participants and decision-makers throughout the process. In order for such learning to take place however, both participants and the managers of the process must be open to discussing and understanding differences. The process must be perceived as a genuine one and, as seen in this case, that is most likely when the managers of the process are perceived as being sincerely interested in learning from participants.

Best practice eight, the institutionalizing of participation, appears to bring all eight best practices together by legitimizing the process of participation. Such legitimization involves a perception that those responsible for carrying out participatory processes are truly committed to ensuring a fair process as well as respecting the outcomes of that process. As revealed by this analysis, this can take many forms, but most notably includes maintaining participation as a key part of decision-making, follow-through on the outcomes of decisions, and notable support from government representatives. As mentioned before, this idea is clearly outlined in the Public Engagement Guide for the province.

6.2 Evidence of Reed's best practices in the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS) public participation process?

Several of Reed's best practices were reflected in the participation process analyzed in this research; however, some of the criteria outlined were noticeably absent from the process. The findings related to the presence of Reed's best practices in the 2012 public participation process for the development of the 2014-2024 PSFMS will be discussed in details below.

Regarding the philosophy of empowerment, equity, trust and learning, the findings indicate that the concept of learning was notable in the case being studied here. Several participants indicated that their main reason for attending the sessions was to learn both from participants as well as the decision-makers. The forest researchers/scientists expressed that their ultimate purpose at the sessions were to learn what values were of interest to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as well as to learn more about the forest management process in the province. On the other hand, it is apparent that the capacity for learning at the sessions could have been enhanced if participants from the general public were more knowledgeable about forestry issues. This could have been enabled if decision-makers had provided timely and relevant background information to participants prior to the sessions, this is also a consideration related to the issue of empowerment. This idea is also suggested by the literature and decision-makers should consider this when embarking on future participatory processes.

The other concepts regarding this philosophy – equity and trust – though considered to be present in the participation process to some extent, could also be enhanced, according to the findings. The issue of distrust arose in the process based on previous negative experiences with forest management planning in the province as well as the perception of participants having no real influence on decision. Participants perceived that they were unable to influence decisions based on the fact that the FSB appeared to have already developed a plan for the strategy document. Going forward, the FSB will have to take this into consideration and determine whether participants should be involved from the conception to determine the direction of the strategy if they wish to pursue best practices in public participation. FSB representatives explained that this path was taken because they were already aware of the major values and concerns of the stakeholders due to their involvement in the forest management initiatives of the province over the years, including the five-year district planning process and the responses of the public to the previous ten-year strategy document.

One suggestion for improving the level of trust in future processes involves being accountable for the plans made in this strategy document. Interviewees indicated their interest in seeing whether the suggested actions outlined in the 2014-2024 PSFMS document will be carried out. This will determine whether future processes will be taken seriously and will also inform the level of engagement in future processes. If stakeholders believe that there will be no follow-through on decisions made in participatory processes, they will eventually see such processes as a waste of time and will lose interest in participating in such initiatives.

Another aspect that should be considered in order to engender trust within future forest management planning initiatives is the establishment of clear objectives among stakeholders at the beginning of the process. As pointed out in the results of this research, persons had different ideas of what the ultimate objectives of the sessions were; this led to a sense of disappointment once expectations were not realized. Such situations fuel distrust, and this can be combatted by setting clear objectives and ensuring that participants are aware of these objectives and agree to them. This might require some level of trade-offs in initial discussions with stakeholders, and might be a time consuming endeavor, however it is a process worth undertaking if it builds trust and result in participants being more meaningfully engaged and final decisions being supported by a wider cross-section of stakeholders.

In a related issue of how soon to involve stakeholders, the best practice criterion of involving stakeholders as early as possible and throughout the process was seen as important by all, but with a difference of opinion regarding how early stakeholders want to be engaged. However, as a general rule, the participation literature suggests that early engagement is ideal and the majority of respondents agree with this view. In the case being analyzed participants were not involved in the initial plans that would guide the engagement process, and this resulted in a negative view of the process by some participants. With this in mind, the stakeholders should be given the opportunity to be involved with the process from the outset. Results indicate there may be merit in establishing a small committee representative of all the relevant stakeholders, tasked with managing the public engagement process, from conception through to monitoring. Such a committee would be involved in

deciding on the objectives of the process, the methods to be utilized, who the facilitators will be, what necessary information should be sent to stakeholders prior to the sessions, how the sessions will be evaluated, types of follow-up required, and the monitoring of the outcomes. Once these decisions are made and the public participation process is undertaken, all the relevant information, especially the objectives of the process, should be clearly communicated to all participants at each engagement event and through event documents.

This suggestion of establishing a committee introduces a major consideration of who decides on the committee members. There are several ways that this could be approached, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. Some possibilities are:

- Representation decided by government representatives in consultation with the stakeholder groups;
- Representation decided on solely by stakeholder groups;
- Invitation to relevant stakeholders to volunteer and select the first person that does so for each stakeholder group; or
- Appoint individuals based on their previous involvement in forest management processes.

These are suggestions, and further discussions are needed to determine how such a selection process would work.

Best practice three highlights the need for relevant stakeholders to be analyzed and represented systematically. In the case being analyzed, while there was involvement from all stakeholders considered relevant to forestry related issues, there was little evidence of systematic analysis of these stakeholders. The decision-makers did appear to understand the values and knowledge base of the environmental groups, industry, and the Labrador aboriginal groups. These groups had separate sessions, the environmental groups having a two-day interactive session, facilitated by independent facilitators, and the industry representatives and aboriginal groups of Labrador having meetings with the DNR representatives. According to one decision-maker, the decision to have more detailed interactions with the environmental groups was based on the decision-makers' goal of being better environmental stewards. Similarly, their decision to focus on ecological sustainability in the strategy was based on years of experience interacting with the environmental groups and learning about their values. Likewise, the industry representatives have been a part of forest management planning in NL over the years, as such there would have been some level of understanding regarding their values.

However, there was evidence that the decision-makers were not as aware of the needs of some of the other stakeholder groups. Representatives of the aboriginal groups of Newfoundland, for instance, are of the view that they were not meaningfully engaged, as they were not invited to the aboriginal consultations but to the public session, where they thought they had limited opportunities to influence the strategy. Going forward, it might be more productive for the decision-makers to undertake some form of systematic analysis of

all stakeholders. This could be done through methods such as stakeholder mapping or a survey capturing the values and knowledge base of each stakeholder group.

The methods selected within the 2012 public participation process being discussed here were mainly consultative in nature, with a few deliberative components – the environmental groups' sessions and meetings with the aboriginal groups and industry. Based on responses from interviewees however, there could have been other methods utilized in the process to make the process more accommodating for all stakeholders. Below are some quotations, reflecting some of the suggestions:

So, sure come and make a presentation or submission, but most of the general public are not going to do that, some of them don't even have the capabilities to do that. So why not allow for question and answers. That was only done informally. I would have preferred a more informal approach that would have allowed citizens to just come in and speak from the floor. People had to pre-register and that would discourage some people in itself. (DM-1)

There may be value in also having one-on one phone calls, so people who don't speak out much in a public session can get the chance to voice their ideas. (ENV-3)

I would start in my department first. I would have my managers on board, get their opinions, our weaknesses, our strengths, where we should be going, and get them on side first. Then it's easier when you bring it to the public. Often the government doesn't want to get into a debate with the public, but if you engage government

representatives, then you can have a good discussion internally. And then, they will feel a level of ownership of the process. (FAC)

The good thing with the current way they do it is that with all stakeholders together, you get to understand each other's position, but I think there's a point where you definitely need the one-on-ones. (IND-1)

I'd probably seek out a facilitator who has experience with public consultations, and have a format in which people are given an opportunity to provide input through the use of technology, such as a device, where there are questions and you can indicate your answer via a device. A process where people don't necessarily have to do a lot of homework, but they can be walked through the process and give useful information. (ENV-2)

Presentations are fine, but if there had been a roundtable where topics are put to the table and people asked to offer their views on a range of issues, that would have been a good approach. The issues that got raised were only the ones that were on the agenda of the presenters. (IND-2)

Additionally, within this technologically advanced landscape in which we operate, it would be useful to engage people online. Engaging stakeholders through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter could elicit involvement and feedback from individuals who would not typically attend engagement events. Also, allowing submission of ideas and

feedback via government websites or email could accommodate those who are unable to attend events, but want to provide input. Where any of these methods are available, they should be publicized to make stakeholders aware of the variety of options for their involvement.

With reference to the facilitation criterion outlined in best practice six, it is evident that the level of facilitation and the decision regarding who facilitates engagement sessions are essential to the success of participatory processes. In the 2012 public participation process for the PSFMS, the DNR representatives who were developing the strategy document were also the ones who facilitated most of the sessions, with the exception of the two-day session for environmental groups. This was not ideal, however, the perception of the DNR representatives as willing to listen to the concerns of participants allowed persons to not view their facilitation as biased.

In future participation processes related to the ten-year forest management strategy this should no longer be an issue, as the province now has the Office of Public Engagement (OPE), in which the Public Engagement Branch is responsible for helping provincial government departments to develop public engagement programs. In theory, the involvement of this branch should help with issues of the perception of fairness, although, at least one participant has already indicated that this might not be the case in actuality as the respondent does not consider the OPE to be a neutral group, since the office is an agency of government.

The point is the Office of Public Engagement is still an arm of government, they are not neutral. Consultations should be hosted by an independent body, travelling throughout the province, meeting people talking about what works, what doesn't and policies to protect all values, not just one value. (ENV-1)

In order for such a perception to change, the OPE will have to prove its commitment to authentic participation through the engagement initiatives that they manage.

The integration of local and scientific knowledge in the process was an idea that all participants felt were important, especially with the opportunities for learning that would come from such integration. In the case being analyzed, there were no structured attempts to include scientific knowledge for the purposes of clarifying misconceptions and educating attendees about the issues. Instead, the focus of the sessions was to hear the views of the different stakeholders regarding the direction of the strategy document. Based on responses from interviewees, it is clear that this best practice criterion should be included in future participatory processes. It would be useful to have some sessions where experts are on hand to provide clarification on forestry issues. The inclusion of scientific knowledge could take another form as well, that of making available to stakeholders documents providing general forestry information and expounding on common questions, with this information coming from official and scientific sources. Such documents should be made available to the public in both printed and electronic format and should be provided to stakeholders prior to the engagement events. This would ensure that scientific input is included and stakeholders are

educated about relevant issues and would therefore be better able to contribute to discussions at the participation sessions.

The institutionalization of participation is another issue that respondents would like to see improvements on as it relates to environmental management initiatives. The continuation of public engagement in forest management in the province is already ensured as it is legislated by the Forestry Act. However, respondents indicated that they would like to see a clear commitment from decision-makers that there will be follow-through on the strategic priorities of the 2014-2024 PSFMS. The accountability and monitoring components of the strategy should aid in ensuring that this is done. Additionally, the strategy document offers indicators for its strategic activities, making them measurable. It remains then to see whether these activities will be carried out and to what extent.

Another point raised regarding institutionalization is the signaling of support for participation initiatives by government departments and representatives. In the 2012 process, some individuals mentioned that such support would have been good to show that the administration considered the process to be important.

I think it would've been good if the minister would have stopped in. That would have been nice of him. (GP-1)

The minister never did come out and say anything about the process – never mentioned it at all. (DM-1)

In future initiatives, this is something that is worth considering, and with the OPE now operational, they have vast opportunities to help in ensuring the institutionalization of participation.

6.3 Emerging relevant best practices for environmentally related public participation processes in Newfoundland and Labrador

Apart from the best practices outlined by Reed, there were two other major points that emerged from the interviews and the review of the OPE's public engagement guide. Due to the number of times these ideas were mentioned and the extent to which they were stressed, it is reasonable to consider these as best practices relevant to the Newfoundland and Labrador context. The two points are outlined below.

6.3.1 Participation processes should be well promoted to ensure maximum involvement from relevant stakeholders

In future public engagement initiatives, it will be critical for managers to properly advertise the process and its various avenues for involvement. In the participation process of interest in this paper, there appears to have not been a very strident campaign to inform stakeholders of the sessions. The interview respondents struggled to remember whether they had seen any advertisements related to the process and many were informed of the sessions based on their proximity to the forest industry. Once members of the public are being involved in such initiatives, efforts must be made to ensure that they are aware of the opportunity for their participation and that they know when and where they can provide input. They should

also be given adequate time to consider their input and prepare for participation. As such, promotional activities must include traditional media along with any other methods by which it is guaranteed that a wide cross-section of stakeholders will be reached. This must also be done well in advance of the actual initiatives, so as to ensure that prospective participants are given enough time to prepare their input. Additionally, attempts must also be made, where possible, to invite participation from stakeholders through direct means such as email correspondences to relevant contact lists.

6.3.2 Appropriate follow-up should be done with participants prior to the finalization of the decision

The idea of receiving feedback on their input and understanding the decisions being taken subsequent to the engagement events was a major issue highlighted by the study participants; this is also an idea supported by the literature. It is advisable therefore, that in the future, significant measures be taken by managers to ensure that meaningful follow-up is done with persons who participate in such activities. Many interpret the lack of feedback to mean that their ideas were not of value or were not considered in the decision. Follow-up subsequent to sessions will assure participants that their input was meaningful and valued. They will also be more likely to participate in future initiatives when they are informed of how their input was used.

Specific guidelines are outlined in the OPE Public Engagement Guide, which give credence to the identification of this criterion as a best practice in the province. The guide suggests

that feedback could include aspects such as an overview of discussions; possible solutions considered; areas where opinions diverged and/or converged; and how decision-makers were able to use the input received (Public Engagement Guide).

Evaluation should also be included as an aspect of follow-up. Evaluation of engagement events could take place at the end of these events or be sent to participants after events, with results being used by managers of the process to guide the development of future sessions. If this is done for each engagement activity, it might result in process improvements that could yield positive results within the lifetime of that specific process.

7 Chapter 7 – Recommendations and Conclusions

The findings of this research revealed that the eight best practices outlined by Reed are applicable guidelines for future forest management stakeholder participation processes in Newfoundland and Labrador. This was determined based on the analysis of the interview responses given by study participants as well as the review of several documents relevant to the 2012 participation process and the OPE's Public Engagement Guide. Although not all of these guidelines were present in the case analyzed, they were considered as important by respondents and several of the criteria are also reflected in the province's Public Engagement Guide.

Overall, the 2012 public participation process for the development of the 2014-2024 PSFMS was viewed as more positive than negative, especially compared to past forest management planning processes in the province over the years. There are, however, several suggestions for improvement of the process.

Based on the public engagement spectrum outlined in the Public Engagement Guide, the participation process utilized mainly consultation activities with a few events involving deliberation activities. The views of respondents regarding the process suggest that they believe the engagement activities should have been more deliberative in nature, as they felt there was need for more two-way iterative learning throughout the process. The respondents also wanted to have more meaningful discussions that involved rigorous consideration and led to some clarification or consensus.

Interviewees placed emphasis on two criteria that were not outlined by Reed. These were:

1. Proper promotion of public participation processes to ensure maximum involvement of relevant stakeholders; and
2. Appropriate follow-up should be done with participants prior to the finalization of the decision.

These criteria, along with those put forward by Reed (2008) should be carefully considered in future engagement processes, as they are asserted as essential by individuals who have been involved in such processes in the past.

7.1 Recommendations

Below, are key recommendations that have been identified based on the results of this study:

1. Decision-makers should engage in some form of systematic analysis of relevant stakeholders and ensure that they are represented in the process. This will ensure that the values and knowledge levels of all stakeholders are understood, so that they can be adequately engaged in the process.
2. Establish a committee that includes representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups to help plan the engagement process and to provide guidelines for the process from planning through to implementation and monitoring. This will ensure that stakeholders have a voice throughout the entire process, while not making too many demands on time for a large number of individuals.
3. Establish clear objectives among stakeholders at the beginning of the process. This should also help in improving trust levels and will help in ensuring that expectations are reasonable and are able to be met at the end of the process.
4. Managers of future forest management participation processes should provide relevant background information to participants, especially members of the general public who might need clarification on technical issues, prior to the sessions. This could help in improving the quality of discussions, as participants will be engaging from an informed position and will therefore be able to provide more meaningful input. Educating participants in this manner will not only empower them to

influence decisions, but also facilitate two-way learning between participants throughout the engagement process.

5. Efforts should be made to have more deliberative activities rather than activities of consultation throughout the engagement process.
6. Managers of such processes should seek to employ several methods of engagement that offer a variety of options for involvement. Efforts must be made to involve individuals who might not necessarily speak out in a general forum, providing them with opportunities such as online submissions, social media input, and one-on-one meetings, where necessary.
7. Ensure that engagement activities are properly advertised via local media at appropriate times when the advertisements are likely to be seen or heard by relevant stakeholders. Advertisements should also be done well in advance of sessions to allow prospective participants enough time for preparation.
8. It is assumed that subsequent participation processes for the development of the ten-year PSFMS will be managed by the Office of Public Engagement. It is important to ensure that the facilitation of sessions by the OPE are seen as authentic and are not perceived as being strongly influenced by the FSB.
9. In order to improve the level of trust in forest management planning processes, decision-makers should ensure that follow-up is done with participants, so that they are informed of how their input and that of other participants is being considered. Additionally, there should be follow-through on stated strategic activities and priorities.

10. Have sessions (where possible) or compile documents that provide some level of scientific perspective on issues which might be misunderstood by some stakeholders. If engagement events become more deliberative, this might already be built into the process.
11. Ensure that there is ongoing evaluation of the engagement activities, so as to determine the success levels of sessions and make improvements where necessary.
12. Managers should consider the possibility of making efforts to signal the government's commitment to the participation process and the outcomes of the process.

7.2 Future Research & Policy Focus Areas

Throughout the research, there was one major issue that emerged as a recurring theme but is beyond the scope of this research. This issue is that of having an overarching land use planning policy in Newfoundland and Labrador. Study participants stated that because there is a lack of a general land use planning authority, individuals usually bring all land use concerns to the five-year district planning level, even if they are non-forestry issues. As a result, the planning process is sometimes slowed down by non-forest issues. As one research participant shared:

We're doing forest management planning without resource planning. Forest management planning should be a piece of the puzzle in an overall land use plan. Without a land use plan for the province, we're having conflicting resource issues always occurring. There needs to be a comprehensive land use strategy for the

province, which a plan like this would feed from. So such a policy would set the overall objectives for how the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want the resources to be managed and what takes priority, not the departments. Departments shouldn't determine priorities. That's the problem. (FAC)

This is a policy issue that warrants further research and attention by relevant authorities.

Additionally, the study revealed that there were, in general, poor levels of attendance at the engagement sessions held during the 2012 participation process. Discussions with interviewees revealed that this is a pattern in Newfoundland and Labrador, where public participation activities are not well attended. A possible area for future research is the analysis of turnout rates at public participation initiatives in the province, as well as an examination of the factors that influence low turnout. It would also be meaningful to discover who attend engagement events and what motivates them to do so.

7.3 Conclusion

The nature of participation processes dictates that some elements, such as the stakeholders to be involved and the methods to be used, must be context specific. In general, however, the findings of this study and the recommendations provided above reflect the guidelines for good public participation processes from the literature, and as such, if followed, are likely to result in processes that are considered to be successful by the individuals engaged. It should be noted that as a case study in the particular context of forestry in Newfoundland and Labrador, the findings of this research might not be reproducible elsewhere and are not

generalizable. However, understanding the views of those involved in this forest management participation process might help to inform future environmentally related participation processes. The recommendations put forward here are also useful and valid since they are not based solely on the views of the interviewees, but on the principles outlined in the broader participation literature as well as the guiding document for participation initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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Appendix A - Interview Schedule

Managers/Designers of the process

1. Can you start by describing the participation process for the development of the 2014-2024 Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS) to me?
2. When did the process commence?
3. What were the initial aims of the process?
4. Who would you say have been the key partners in the process? What were their roles?
5. What efforts were made to involve all relevant stakeholders?
6. Do you think there were enough people and a good enough mix of people, at the sessions to get a good discussion? If not, why not?
7. How important is it to have a representative cross-section of the relevant stakeholders participate in such a process? Why is this so?
8. What did you think of the motivation, interest and commitment of the public participants at the sessions?
9. What did you think of the quality of discussions among the public participants at the summit?
10. Was the quality of the input from participants what you needed for your strategy development process? Please say why and, if not, what would have improved that quality?
11. What were the most useful forms of feedback that you got from the public engagement in terms of helping you in your strategy development work? For example:
 - listening directly to the views of the public and their discussions
 - getting feedback from the people facilitating the process
 - seeing public responses to the website
 - reading the final report on the whole process
 - any others?
12. How valuable were the outputs from this process to your strategy development work? Please say why.
13. To what extent was the feedback from the public integrated into the final strategy?
14. Do you feel that the design of the process worked well to get the sort of information you needed to develop the PSFMS? Please say why.
15. Was there anything that you think worked particularly well, and that you would recommend to future participation initiatives?
16. Was there anything that did not work well, and should not be done again?

17. Was there anything missing from the engagement process that would have been useful and should have been included?
18. What would you say is the main value of a public engagement process of this sort to the forest strategy development process? Please explain.
19. What would have increased the value of this process to the overall strategy - anything that could have been changed or added to make it more valuable? Please say why.
20. Can you give examples of changes that happened (or are planned) as a result of the public engagement process?
21. Do you feel that the information gained from the public engagement process has improved the value and quality of the decision-making process and the strategy conclusions? Please say why.
22. Overall, do you think that the public engagement in the PSFMS process was successful? Please say why.
23. Public consultation obviously has financial costs. What factors affect your view on whether this is money well spent, or not?
24. Can you suggest any specific lessons from this public engagement process, especially any factors for success that could make future engagement activities work better?
25. Is there anything else you would like to say about the public engagement process that we have not covered?

Participants

1. What was your understanding of the purpose of the consultation and how the results of the consultation would be used?
2. What were your expectations heading into the consultation and were these expectations met?
3. Are you satisfied with the information that you were provided with prior to the session? Were you given specific and enough instructions about the rules of the session and general guidelines to make the session more understandable?
4. What were your thoughts on the information provided at the consultation session? Did you feel that the information provided was fair and balanced, and that most of the different views were covered (in the written information, and information from experts, speakers etc)?
5. Was there enough information provided at each stage to enable you to take part fully in the discussions? Was there any point in the consultation that you felt you would have liked more (or less) information?

6. What did you think about the mix of people that attended the session? Were there any groups of people that you feel should have been involved but were not?
7. Do you think the process was accessible to everyone that was relevant to the process? In terms of time, location, number of sessions, etc.
8. How do you feel about the facilitation of the Session? Do you think any group was given more opportunities to speak than any other? Did one view dominate? Do you feel that everyone there had an equal chance to have their say?
9. Were you able to talk about the things you wanted to? If not, why not?
10. Was there enough time to cover all the main issues?
11. Generally, what forms of information did you find most useful (e.g. written information, what other participants said, what the experts or speakers said, what a participant said in a presentation)?
12. What were the best / most successful aspects of the session? Overall, what do you think worked best at the session you went to? Do you remember anything specific that worked well?
13. What were the worst / least successful aspects of the session? What do you think worked least well, and should be changed in future to make it easier for someone like you to contribute, or to make the public contribution better?
14. Was there anything missing from the process; something you think should have happened but didn't?
15. Have you had any feedback about how the information collected at the session you attended is being used? If yes, did that feedback make sense to you, and was it useful?
16. Do you feel like your views were taken into consideration? What is your impression of the follow-up after the consultation? Were you made aware of what happened subsequent to the session?
17. Are you clear about how the session you took part in fed into the overall development of the PSFMS? If not, what do you still need to know before you are clear?
18. Did taking part in this consultation make you feel more involved in the development of the final Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy (PSFMS)?
19. Do you think the Government listened to and will take notice of what the public said when they make their next decisions on forest management? If not, why not?
20. As a result of your involvement, are you more likely to want to get involved in discussions on these sorts of issues in future, or not?
21. Public consultation obviously has financial costs. Do you think it is money well spent, or not?
22. Are there any specific lessons about involving people in environmental decision-making that you would like the Government to take from this consultation?

23. What are your thoughts on the overall process?
24. How do you think this type of public participation process could be improved?
25. Is there anything else you would like to say about being involved in this consultation that we have not covered?

Facilitators

1. Were you completely clear and comfortable with your role as a facilitator? Please say why.
2. What would have made your input more satisfactory to you and to the process? And why?
3. Was there any additional information you would have liked before you facilitated the session? If so, what?
4. Do you think that the schedule and process for the event were appropriate?
5. Do you think there were enough people present and a good enough mix of people at the sessions to get a good discussion? Please explain.
6. What did you think of the motivation, interest and commitment of the participants?
7. What did you think of the quality of discussions among the participants?
8. Do you feel that the issues raised in the sessions were adequately recorded / captured? Please say why.
9. Did any one participant or point of view dominate the discussions? Please elaborate.
10. To what extent did this process deliver the value you would have liked to see? And please say why.
11. Overall, what do you think worked best at these sessions?
12. What do you think worked least well, and should be changed in future similar initiatives?
13. Was there anything missing from the process - something you think should have happened but didn't?
14. Overall, do you think that the public engagement in the PSFMS process was successful? Please say why.
15. Is there anything else you would like to say about the PSFMS public engagement process?

Appendix B - Breakdown of Interview Questions Based on Reed's Criteria

Reed's Criteria	Questions
Stakeholder participation needs to be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were your thoughts on the information provided at the consultation session? Did you feel that the information provided was fair and balanced, and that most of the different views were covered (in the written information, and information from experts, speakers etc)? • Was there enough information provided at each stage to enable you to take part fully in the discussions? Was there any point in the consultation that you felt you would have liked more (or less) information? • What did you think about the mix of people that attended the session? Were there any groups of people that you feel should have been involved but were not? • Do you think the process was accessible to everyone that was relevant to the process? In terms of time, location, number of sessions, etc.
Where relevant, stakeholder participation should be considered as early as possible and throughout the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and when did you hear about the Sessions? • Did you have adequate time to get involved in the process? • Do you believe stakeholders should have been involved earlier in the process? • How important is early involvement in the forest management process?
Relevant stakeholders need to be analyzed and represented systematically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who attended the sessions and why were those stakeholders targeted?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you think about the mix of people that attended the session? Were there any groups of people that you feel should have been involved but were not? • Do you think the process was accessible to everyone that was relevant to the process? In terms of time, location, number of sessions, etc.
Clear objectives for the participatory process need to be agreed among stakeholders at the outset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your understanding of the purpose of the consultation and how the results of the consultation would be used? • What were your expectations heading into the consultation and were these expectations met? • Are you satisfied with the information that you were provided with prior to the session? Were you given specific and enough instructions about the rules of the session and general guidelines to make the session more understandable?
Methods should be selected and tailored to the decision-making context, considering the objectives, type of participants and appropriate level of engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the best / most successful aspects of the session? • What were the worst / least successful aspects of the session? • What would you change about the process? • Was there anything missing from the process; something you think should have happened but didn't?
Highly skilled facilitation is essential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel about the facilitation of the Session? • Do you think any group was given more opportunities to speak than any other? • Did one view dominate? • Do you feel that everyone there had an equal chance to have their say?

<p>Local and scientific knowledge should be integrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, what forms of information did you find most useful (e.g. written information, what other participants said, what the experts or speakers said, what a participant said in a presentation)? • Did your understanding of the forest management issue change during the process and how? • How much did you learn during the process?
<p>Participation needs to be institutionalized</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of your involvement, are you more likely to want to get involved in discussions on these sorts of issues in future, or not? • What does your future participation depend on? • Are there any specific lessons about involving people in environmental decision-making that you would like the Government to take from this consultation? • How important is the institutionalization of the participatory process in forest management?